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FOREWORD

On the 12th of November, 1988, a one-day workshop on the history of women of Hong Kong was held - the first ever in what we hope will become a regular feature in Hong Kong of workshops and meetings on women-related areas of research and activity. Its objective was defined in the opening address as restoring 'women to history and to restore our history to women.' The following collection of talks given on that memorable day will tell you how far we got in meeting this objective.

What we shall all remember is the atmosphere of that workshop: the meeting room became an exciting space for a lively exchange of ideas and information, for spontaneous and enthusiastic participation on the part of a sizeable audience. We came away enlightened, stimulated - and frustrated. There was a consensus that we need more, much more, of the same.

Expression of thanks go to the Hong Kong Council of Women and the Centre of Asian Studies for sponsoring the workshop and for the generous support given by the staff of the Centre. We are also most grateful to Ms. Irene Tong from the Centre of Asian Studies for transcribing the speeches - as well as questions and answers -from recordings, thus making this booklet possible.

Maria Jaschok
Editor and Workshop organizer

Hong Kong, August 1989

Please note, this booklet is for private circulation only. We thank the contributors for their generosity in making available to us their manuscripts and notes. Any error which might have occurred in the course of transcription and printing is the responsibility of the editor.

Whereas some passages which deal with workshop proceedings were deleted, and occasional repetitions which occur in verbal speech patterns were edited out as they make for irritating reading, on the whole, there has been little editorial interference so as to preserve the unique flavour of individual contributions.

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The Centre of Asian Studies and
The Hong Kong Council of Women jointly present

a workshop

HOW HISTORY BECOMES NATURE: AN INQUIRY INTO OUR HISTORY AS WOMEN IN HONG KONG

Venue: Reading Room, Centre of Asian Studies,
Room G-4, Tang Chi Ngong Building.

The objective of this workshop is to contribute toward the de-mystification of women's so-called "natural" state in society. For this purpose certain parameters of the dominant patriarchal (of colonial and Chinese derivation) culture are explored, firstly, in terms of the impact and resultant limitations on women (Chinese and Western) and secondly, in terms of the articulation of resistance and female power.

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Saturday, November 12, 1988

9:00-9:30am.	Registration	
9:30-9:45am.	**INTRODUCTION**	Speaker: Maria Jaschok
9:45-10:20am.	**HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES** *Attitudes towards female talent in traditional Chinese society* followed by discussion	Chair: Maria Jaschok Speaker: Clara Lau
10:20-10:30am.	Coffee and Tea break	
10:30-12:00pm.	*The role of Women in Chinese theatre from the Qing dynasty to the present* *Women of Old Hong Kong: Expatriate Women in the British Colony 1841-1941* followed by discussion	Speaker: Barbara Kaulbach Speaker: Susanna Hoe
12:00-1:00pm.	Lunch	
1:00-3:30pm.	**CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES** *Sexual assault and physical violence against women* *The relationship of grassroots women to the community* *Gender role stereotyping and career opportunities for women in Hong Kong: looking back and looking forward* followed by discussion	Chair: Linda Koo Speaker: Katherine Tang Speaker: Mona Lo Speaker: Ho Suk-Ching
3:30-3:45pm.	Coffee and Tea break	
3:45-4:00pm.	**SUMMING UP**	Speaker: Cecilia Young

Summaries of the above talks and relevant reading-lists have been prepared for distribution among workshop participants.

WORKSHOP -- HOW HISTORY BECOMES NATURE

12 November 1988

Dr. Maria Jaschok (chair): OPENING ADDRESS

It's a real pleasure to welcome you to the first workshop presented jointly by the Hong Kong Council of Women and the Centre of Asian Studies. It is all our hope - that is, the hope of those who organized this workshop - that more may follow to fill a gap we feel is crying out to be filled.

The objective of this workshop is to begin to chart aspects of women's history in Hong Kong. Women's history, as Joan Kelly-Gadol put it, has a dual goal: to restore women to history and to restore our history to women.

History as interpreted in standard textbooks on Hong Kong gives women, if they have a place at all, a largely supportive role to play: as wives, concubines, kept women, as mothers, sex objects, as domestic drudges. They are part of a canvas on which history (as made and perceived by men) was inscribed. We are now starting to see a change in this, but it's only as yet a beginning. Susanna Hoe will go some way this morning - and soon with the publication of her book - to redress the balance - at least as it concerns the history of expatriate women in Hong Kong.

There is another level of enquiry - I think that the title of our workshop gives you a clue as to what I am referring : as we ponder our invisibility we come to ponder perceptions - then and now - of the relative standing of the female sex, associated functions and responsibilities, rights and privileges assigned and withheld, perceptions of female psychology,... It is necessary in the process of rewriting to demystify and dissect those attributes that relegated and still seem to relegate women permanently, because 'naturally', into the sphere of a walled-in domesticity. Although social developments have taken place that make the domestic confinement for the majority of women in the industrialized world impossible, the walls are still there, even if less visible. Still confining, still colouring social perceptions of women who long ago outgrew the domestic realm, still delineating the nature, so-called, of women.

Both Ms. Clara Lau and Dr. Barbara Kaulbach will present to you in their talks facets of Chinese culture that reveal nature to be a child of history: to use Roland Barthes's words, revealing to us how "in myth, things lose the memory that they once were made." They will trace enduring cultural prescriptions and strictures concerning women, as well as be discussing influential images of women embodying these prescriptions. Not missing, however, are messages of subversion and resistance. Because what one learns too is that however oppressive the social and cultural vaults which arched over women's lives, either due to unusual combinations of circumstances, or to a particularly strong personality, we are also rediscovering pockets of female power and resistance that belie the tale which says women's subordinate place in history was a direct and logical outcome of their natural endowments and inclinations.

I want to give you an illustration of how cultural prescriptions and role models of the past are still infusing our present. A few weeks ago, I discovered on the front page of The Herald Tribune an article which reports the publication of a major theological document from the Vatican entitled Mulieris Dignitatem ("On the Dignity of Women"). This document understands itself to be a major theological response to the women's movement and has been hailed as a new philosophical framework for Christian feminists, so-called. What does it say? The Pope characterizes female identity in terms of the 'vocations' of motherhood and virginity, making almost no mention of work or other public activities for women. Although he condemns male dominance over women as "this evil inheritance", a consequence of the Fall which we all know a woman was responsible for, he insists that the feminine identity emerges from a woman's relationship to a man, not to the world directly. May I remind you this document was published two months ago! Overall, the document is a plea for women to keep faith with a traditional teaching on the feminine role based on an exultation of Mary, whom the Pope describes as "the culminating point, the archetype, of the personal dignity of women". "In the name of liberation from male 'domination'," the Pope says, "women must not appropriate to themselves male characteristics contrary to their own feminine originality." In other words, what had been ascribed to women as God-given, that is immutable.

The answer one would like to give to this comes from a seminal study of the Virgin Mary cult, in which Marina Warner concluded that whatever the central place held in the past by the Virgin Mary in western civilization, what concerns present day - "the reality her myth describes is over, the moral code she affirms has been exhausted." She continues, "the Virgin Mary is not the innate archetype of female nature, the dream incarnate. She is the instrument of a dynamic agument from the Catholic church about the structure of society presented as a God-given code."

To continue with my argument, unless we have seen clearly the forces of cultural molding and the continuity of culture even as we experience dynamic changes that give women an increased share in the labour market, and increased professional opportunities, we cannot understand the continuing price paid by women who, as they take on new responsibilities in the public economic sector, are unable to shed the physical, moral and mental constraints associated with the traditional, domesticated female. That a few women have acquired positions of public prestige is often cited as an indicator of how <u>far</u> Hong Kong women have advanced, but how <u>much</u> does a system need to change in order to accommodate a number of women? On the contrary, a system is more likely to co-opt these women, forcing <u>them</u> to adapt. The majority of women are more like the women of Kwun Tong (Ms. Mona Lo is going to talk about this afternoon) whose venture forth into the world of grassroot organizations is often accompanied by immense stress and guilt. Women continue to pay the price, moving uneasily between private, still the <u>legitimate</u>, sphere and public spheres on the other hand. Both Dr. Katherine Tang and Dr. Ho Suk Ching will develop this theme further - of women trapped between the milestones of nature and history.

Enough said, I turn to the first of two speakers who will be exploring traditional Chinese culture, Ms. Clara Lau. She will explore some of the core prescriptions in Chinese traditional culture which defined society's treatment of women of talent.

To just say a few words about Clara before I hand over to her. Clara is Hong Kong-born, received her B.A. and her M.Phil. from Hong Kong University and is now a Ph.D. candidate and part-time demonstrator in the Department of Chinese here, HKU. Her major academic interests are the history of Chinese women, in the pre-modern era, and in traditional Chinese historiography.

THE ATTITUDES TOWARD FEMALE TALENT IN TRADITIONAL CHINESE SOCIETY

Ms Clara Lau
Department of Chinese, University of Hong Kong

In the following presentation, I would like to give a brief summary of the different opinions prevailing in traditional Chinese society, in respect of female talent. The word "talent" here is used as an equivalent of the Chinese term "才", which in general means capability, including both inborn ability as well as knowledge acquired through the educational process. In the past, discussion of "talent" was always linked with the discussion of "virtue" and "happiness". "Virtue" here is used as an equivalent of the Chinese term "德", which means moral integrity, while "happiness" is used as an equivalent of the Chinese term "福", which means blessing and good fortune.

I am going to talk first about the Chinese concepts of the interrelationship of "virtue", "talent", and "happiness". After this background introduction, I shall continue with an examination of the various attitudes toward female talent.

In traditional Chinese society, the belief that "virtue" was much more important than "talent" was very common. During the course of the development of Chinese philosophy, whether the nature of "talent" is good, positive (善) or not has long been a matter of controversy. In the 3rd century B.C., the great philosopher Mencius (孟子) pointed out that the nature of "talent" was good, as was the nature of human beings. He held that evil deeds were not the result of human "talent", but rather were caused by people being bewildered by external evil attractions. Mencius's argument was challenged and modified by later neo-Confucianists. The Song philosopher Cheng Yi (程頤) argued that "talent" was neutral rather than positive. His view was that unlike the nature of mankind, "talent" didn't come from the Universe, but rather from "temperament" (氣), which could be either positive or negative. Another eminent philosopher Zhu Xi (朱熹) summarized the issue and claimed that at the very beginning, "talent" was positive, but as it fell on men, its goodness varied according to the different "temperaments" of individuals. The arguments of the scholars of later generations followed two main streams. While one group stressed that the nature of "talent" was good, the other group emphasized that "talent" may direct evil deeds.

Although there existed different opinions on the nature of "talent", the view that valued "talent" less than "virtue" proved to be relatively consistent in traditional Chinese society. Apart from the tendency to look down upon it, "talent" has always occupied a position subordinate to "virtue". The ancient Confucianists set "virtue" as the first and most fundamental quality for men to acquire. During the Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties, people did talk more about "talent" and granted it a higher position, but they never denied that "virtue" should be used to master "talent". During the Song Dynasty, there was more discussion on the issue of "virtue" versus "talent". The famous scholar Sima Guang (司馬光) elaborated a great deal on this matter. He regarded those who used "virtue" to master "talent" to be gentlemen of moral integrity, whereas those who used "talent" to master "virtue" as mean persons of lower position. In his opinion, "talent" could be employed as a tool, but it was relatively less important than "virtue".

The majority of the Ming and Qing intellectuals went on to emphasize the importance of "virtue". The content of some popular reading books designed for common people such as <u>Cai-gen-tan</u> (菜根譚) and <u>Shen-yin-yu</u> (呻吟語) also reflect the above view. They repeatedly mentioned that only those who possessed "virtue" could make good use of "talent". They also taught people that not showing off one's "talent" but keeping silent was another form of wisdom.

The tendency to value "virtue" over "talent" was also prominently reflected in traditional Chinese literary criticism. In general, most critics claimed "virtue" to be the basis for all academic and literary works. They held that without a sincere commitment to virtue, no matter how well-written a work was, it would lack seriousness, and could in no way be regarded as a good work. In other words, it was pointless to make a display of one's literary talent without improving one's work with a sense of morality and righteousness.

Apart from viewing "talent" as less important than "virtue", the traditional Chinese view was that "talent" can also adversely affect one's fate and bring one "unhappiness". In this sense, "talent" was somehow regarded as inauspicious. Time and again poets and philosophers exclaimed pessimistically on the phenomenon that the more talented one was, the unluckier or unhappier one seemed to be. Well-known verses such as "古來才命兩相妨" (from ancient times, talent and good fortune tend to restrain each other) by Li Shang-yin (李商隱) and "人生識字憂患始" (in life troubles always begin with knowledge) by Su Dong-bo (蘇東坡) may serve as typical examples. Furthermore, the theme that "the gods are jealous of talented people" (造物忌才) was also reflected in a number of fictional and dramatic works. Many characters in these stories are subjected to all sorts of difficulties and challenges. However, some of the authors deliberately provided happy endings, possibly in order to portray a better fate for talented people than was probable in reality.

The famous saying "a lack of talent is a virtue in women" (女子無才便是德) is found first in works of the Ming Dynasty and, to the best of my knowledge, was first recorded by the Ming scholar Chen Ji-ru (陳繼儒) in his miscellaneous notebooks (安得長者言). In this book, he jotted down wise maxims and philosophical verses that he had heard from the elders. Hence, while Chen did record this proverb in writing, it was simply something he had heard rather than something he had invented. Although this proverb did not appear in print until the late period of imperial China, it has ideological background for its emergence. And, different attitudes toward female talent existed long before.

Below, I intend to summarize traditional views on three aspects of this issue: firstly, whether women should possess "talent"; secondly, whether "talent" and "virtue" tend to be inversely proportional; and finally, whether "talent" will adversely affect one's happiness.

Whether women should possess "talent"

Traditional Chinese educationalists time and again stressed the importance of learning. The early Confucianists mentioned that "if a person does not learn, he or she will not obtain knowledge and morality, just like if jade is not polished, it will not turn into a beautiful object" (玉不琢不成器;人不學不知理). There was no attempt to indicate that this instruction was meant merely for males. However, with the passage of time, as a series of female educational theories were established, men were encouraged to acquire knowledge rather than women.

According to the Confucian Classics, noble women in ancient times were to receive specially-designed education before their marriage. They were required to be educated in the "four virtues" (四德), namely, morality, speech, appearance, and work (德言容功). During the Eastern Han Dynasty, Ban Zhao (班昭) in her Instructions for Women (女誡) elaborated a great deal on these "four virtues", and in later generations, these "four virtues" developed into ideal characteristics which women should possess.

As we can see from the design of the "four virtues" education during the early ages, it was generally not intended that women should be forbidden from learning to read and write. However, in later generations, some scholars came to believe that it was useless for women to acquire knowledge and they did not allow women in their families to learn to read and write. In family educational handbooks, we can easily find rules such as "women should remain illiterate", "it is strictly forbidden to teach female offspring to read and write", "women should only learn a few characters related to housework, otherwise it will be harmful".

Also, in the collected works (文集) of individual scholars which record many episodes of their lives, we may also discover touching stories of girls being excluded from family education. We can find talented girls who were not supposed to receive education secretly learning from their brothers; we can find goddesses advising parents to educate their talented daughters; we can also find some mothers who, believing that reading and writing would draw their daughters' concentration away from housework, deliberately suppressed their desire to learn. These stories reflect one of the attitudes toward female talent: that women were not entitled to study under any circumstance.

Another attitude which existed was one which allowed women to read and write, but with certain restrictions. It was felt that the content of education women received should be confined to that which taught women how to behave, allowing them to do housework, enabling them to serve their parents-in-law, encouraging

them to learn chaste deeds from books, and so on. The people who held such a view felt that the primary aim of teaching women was to ensure that they could learn virtue, filial piety, loyalty, chastity, and other desirable moral conducts. This would, of course, strengthen the Confucian social order in many ways.

As to whether women should write poetry, there existed a wide range of opinions. In traditional China, "talent" could most easily be manifested through the writing of literary works, especially poetry. Those who supported women's literature very much appreciated the aesthetic perception of their works, which they felt were not easy to find in men's writing. In their opinion, the sentimentality of women was beneficial to their artistic creation.

Throughout many genres, from works recording actual events to invented fictions, it is not difficult at all to find scenes of fathers supervising their daughters in composing literary compositions. We may also notice that scholars record the happiness their educated wives brought them through joining them in poetry writing. Moreover, some scholars even dared to accept female students. The most famous of such scholars was the great poet Yuan Mei (袁枚) of the Qing Dynasty. He had more than twenty female pupils, and he regarded three of them as his very close friends. When he was 75 years old, he went to visit Hangzhou and met thirteen of his female students, and this occasion was recorded by a painting.

Yuan Mei's action of accepting female students was appreciated by some of his courageous friends, but was also severely attacked by many conservatives. The most famous of the latter was Zhang Xue-cheng (章學誠), who accused Yuan Mei of deceiving innocent women, teaching them to seek fame and position instead of to perform their household duties. Of course, Yuan Mei was also criticized for having too much contact with young ladies, an unacceptable mode of behaviour for a gentleman in traditional Chinese society.

As for the women writers themselves, what did they think? Though they argued that they had the right to be educated and to compose literary works, sometimes they also experienced internal struggles. The famous Song woman writer Zhu Su-zhen (朱淑真) once queried whether it was sinful for women to write poetry. Another Qing writer Wang Zhen-yi (王貞儀) stressed that women writers should in the first instance study the Confucian Classics rather than devoting themselves to the development of literary skills. On the other hand, some women writers never let other people read their works. As women, they felt guilt in writing, but they could not successfully suppress their desire and inspiration, and thus they treated their creation as a game, and after they finished writing, they destroyed all of their works, or asked their offspring not to keep them. We can find many examples of this in fictions, collected works, and miscellaneous notes, especially of the Qing Dynasty, the dynasty which had the largest number of women writers.

I have just presented several opinions on whether women should possess "talent". Here, I would like to add one more point. Referring to the Chinese literary works, images of "talented girls", "female scholars", "female officials", etc., can be widely found. For example, in famous works such as Female Optimus (女狀元), Dream of the Red Chamber (紅樓夢), Lovers Reborn as Lovers (再生緣), Flowers in the Mirror (鏡花緣), we come across many talented women. Hence, while some conservatives argued that literature had nothing to do with women, we may observe that totally opposite opinions also existed.

Whether "talent" and "virtue" tend to be inversely proportional

Now I shall proceed to the second aspect of our discussion.

Beginning in the Tang Dynasty, there was continued discussion as to whether talented women tended to have less "virtue". The development of this view was closely related to the growing emphasis on female chastity. The fact that Tang literature recorded a number of talented girls who married more than once, and that quite a number of women writers were prostitutes, resulted in people coming to regard having "talent" as a sign of having lost female virtue.

Hence, literary criticism was sometimes virtue-oriented. Remarried women writers were accused of having "talent" but being without "virtue". Cai Wen-ji (蔡文姬) of the Han Dynasty and Li Qing-zhao (李清照) of the Song Dynasty were two famous victims of this value system. Subsequently, people began to assign blame to female "talent". It was proposed that female "talent" was the obstacle to realizing female "virtue",

them to learn what decide from books, and so on. The people who held such a view felt that the primary aim of educating women was to ensure that they would learn virtue, filial piety, loyalty, chastity, and other important moral concepts. This would, of course, strengthen the Confucian social order in many ways.

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Throughout many genres, from works recording actual events to invented fiction, it is not difficult at all to find scenes of fathers appreciating their daughters in composing literary masterpieces. We may also notice that scholars around the happiness their talented wives brought them through playing them in poetry writing. Moreover, some scholars even dared to accept female students. The most famous of such scholars was the great poet Yuan Mei (袁枚) of the Qing Dynasty. He had more than twenty female pupils, and he regarded three of them as his very close friends. When he was 80 years old, he went to visit Hangzhou and was the host of his female students, and this occasion was recorded by a painting.

Yuan Mei's action of accepting female students was appreciated by some of his contemporary friends, but was also severely attacked by many conservatives. The most famous of his detractors, Zhang Xuecheng (章學誠), who accused Yuan Mei of deceiving innocent women, teaching them to write music and poetry instead of to perform their household duties. Of course, Yuan Mei was also criticized for having too much contact with young ladies, an unacceptable mode of behaviour for a gentleman in traditional Chinese society.

As for the women writers themselves, what did they think? Though they argued that they had the right to be educated and to compose literary works, sometimes they also experienced internal struggles. The famous Song woman writer Zhu Shuzhen (朱淑真) once doubted whether it was moral for women to write poetry. Another Qing writer Wang Zhaoyuan (王照圓) asserted that women writers should in the first instance study the Confucian Classics rather than devoting themselves to the development of literary skills. On the other hand, some women writers never let other people read their writings. As women, they felt guilt in writing, but they could not successfully suppress their desire and inspiration, and thus they treated their creation as a game, and when they finished writing, they destroyed all of their works, or asked their offspring not to keep them. We can find many examples of this in fictions, collected works, and other documentations, especially of the Qing Dynasty, the dynasty which had the largest number of women writers.

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Whether "talent" and "virtue" lead to the women's moralization

Now I shall proceed to the second aspect of our discussion.

Beginning in the Song Dynasty, there was continued discussion as to whether talented women tended to have less "virtue". The establishment of this view was closely related to the growing emphasis on female chastity. The fact that Tang documents recorded a number of talented girls who married more than once, and that quite a number of talented women were prostitutes, resulted in people coming to regard having "talent" as a sign of having lost female virtue.

"Talent", "Beauty", articles and gentlemen, virtue-grounded. Premodern women writers were demand of [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] of the Han Dynasty and Li Qingzhao (李清照) of the [illegible]. [illegible] two famous women of the [illegible] [illegible]. Subsequently, [illegible] began to [illegible] "talent" and the [illegible] "virtue".

because talented girls would pursue their own world and would no longer be submissive or obedient. In some cases, their "talent" might help them to understand or to make use of poetry, and through this they might fall in love with male scholars and act in so-called non-virtuous ways. In order to prevent such undesirable things from happening, it was better to have women remain unlettered.

Nevertheless, opposite opinions did exist. Some scholars argued that female "talent" and "virtue" might not necessarily be inversely proportional. Some scholars pointed out that "talent" may not manifest itself merely in literary work, but also in how they handled their families. Others argued that one needed to be educated before one could try to act chastely. The famous writer Li Yu (李 漁) of the early Qing Dynasty once severely attacked the saying that "a lack of talent is a virtue in women", noting that not all women writers failed to maintain their chastity and that not all women poor in moral qualities were educated. This was a very forceful rebuttal.

Also, in the numerous scholar-beauty fictions of the 17th and 18th centuries, we may trace a common thread of praise to female "talent" by writers. Apart from describing the beauty of female characters, the writers, far more so than their pre-Qing predecessors, gave space to introducing, if not exaggerating, their "talent" and wisdom. For example, the author of Xing-feng-liu (醒風流) laid down "talent", "beauty", and "passion" as the three factors of "real beauty", with "talent" being placed in the prime position.

Therefore, although some conservatives held that female "talent" would endanger their chastity, at the same time other writers brought forward the importance of female "talent".

Whether "talent" will adversely affect one's "happiness"

Now I will move on to the third aspect.

As men exclaimed about the sad fate of talented intellectuals, so women intellectuals also sighed about the phenomenon of talented women leading unhappy lives. Repeatedly women poets expressed their feeling that they gained more trouble along with their "talent", because the more they knew, the more they worried. Male writers also expressed somewhat sympathetic views on unhappy talented women, who were married to foolish husbands, were ill-treated by their families, became widows at early ages, or even died too young. It is sometimes the case that such women were wives, concubines or relatives of male scholars, who recorded their stories in their writings.

The sympathetic attitudes of male writers were more widely reflected in fiction and drama. Many of the works brought out the theme that gods are jealous of both talented men and women, and thus they are more likely to experience a lot of trouble in their lives. Only those ugly fools who were not talented at all had the chance to lead happy lives without difficulties. The more beautiful and talented a woman was, the unhappier the life she was likely to lead. This theme, called "hong-yan bao-ming" (紅顏薄命) (pretty face, short life), is most interestingly and outstandingly manifested in Li Yu's fiction (無聲戲) and play-script (奈何天). He proposed that under the pattern of reincarnation, being a beautiful and talented woman was indeed receiving the heaviest punishment. In her previous life, she undoubtedly had committed a terrible crime. Thus, on reincarnation, she became a talented beauty, destined to marry the ugliest man, be ill-treated by him and his family, and suffer for the rest of her life. Li Yu made use of his stories to advise all unhappy talented and beautiful women to remain calm, patient, submissive, and not to hurt themselves further.

Nevertheless, some scholars attempted to deny the inverse relationship between female "talent" and "fate". For example, the Qing scholar Chen Zhao-lun (陳兆崙) questioned whether all talented people were unhappy; and Ye Huang (葉鐄) tried to interpret the situation from another angle. He argued from the psychological point of view that since talented women had a good range of knowledge but only a very narrow scope of life, they were likely to develop melancholic characters. Thus, when they experience troubles, they might not be able to overcome them and would be subjected to illness. Hence, he held that it was not "talent" which caused them misfortune, but rather a confined environment which brought them unhappiness. These were the counter arguments to the view that "talent" and "happiness" are inversely proportional.

Conclusion

I have just noted the different opinions on whether women should acquire "talent". I would now like to summarize the characteristics of the Chinese evaluations of female "talent".

First of all, we may clearly observe that most Chinese valued "virtue" more than "talent", regardless of the sex. They also believed that too much "talent" would bring misfortune, and that was applicable for both men and women. However, the difference between Chinese attitudes toward male "talent" and female "talent" lies in three main points.

Firstly, imperial China was an agricultural society, with intellectuals only occupying a small strata in the country. The majority of the population were unlettered. Therefore, it was unnecessary to promote education among men, and, much less among women. Secondly, imperial China was a conservative Confucian society. For that society, it sounds reasonable to encourage men to place "virtue" above "talent", and then to advise women to give up unnecessary "talent" and instead to pursue "chastity". That's how "history" became "nature". Thirdly, while men realized that "talent" could bring them misfortune, they could not give up their pursuits, or else there would be no one to run the country and to work for the people. However, for women, who were supposed to stay indoors, the pursuit of "talent" at the expense of "happiness" was not considered worthwhile.

To conclude, I would like to point out that without an absolute definition of "happiness", it is not possible to tell whether "talent" has an adverse effect on it, and thus different interpretations are inevitable. However, we should be aware that treating knowledge as a source of unhappiness is indeed a universal view, and we may easily seek out examples or similar ideas in Western proverbs, or even the Bible. Since my presentation is an historical one, I do not think I should venture too far into the philosophical context, and thus I shall stop here. Thanks for letting me speak to you this morning.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(Question) It seems that the "talent" you're talking about centres on the literary talent of the female poets. It seems to me that when you raised the point about female prostitutes through traditionally-linked "talent", the cause and effect is rather in inverse relation. That is to say, prostitutes have to be talented in order to be prostitutes in the old days; they're supposed to learn to dance, to learn female etiquette; they're supposed to be trained in singing, in writing poetry, and all sorts of leisure activities which are actually the leisure activities of men who belong to the noble classes, the aristocracy. It seems that rather than linked to the question of chastity, it is the socialization of talent in a particular sense, as opposed to political talent or other talent.

(Response) I agree with you that the "talent" here is mostly referred to the literary talent in ancient China. As for your point on prostitutes, I also agree with you that they have to be talented in order to be prostitutes. But the point is, the Tang literature reflected more on the literary talent of the prostitutes rather than political talent or social talent, etc. Because in ancient China, as for talent, I defined it at the beginning as the capability including both inborn abilities as well knowledge acquired through the educational process, that's the general definition. But in traditional Chinese society, for women, for female, the "talent" is mostly restricted to the literary talent. That was a phenomenon rather than a principle, in my opinion.

(Question) Focusing on the Confucian attitude towards female learning, what about the Taoist philosophy, was it more or less sexist in its attitude?

(Response) Thanks for your good question. I deliberately used "traditional" here rather than "Confucian". It was in fact rather a mixture of Confucian, and Taoist and Buddhist attitudes. For example, the most outstanding example is the theme "hung yan bao min" (pretty face, short life). It was a mixture of Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism. As for the Taoist, or the Buddhist, attitude toward female talent, it did not contrast very much with the Confucian attitude, and in fact they tended to intermingle after the Song Dynasty.

(Question) Just a very brief question. You concentrated on the term "cai" (才) and "talent" and I think that's a good equivalent to equate those two terms. However, a very closely related term should be "xian" (賢) which is often translated as "virtue" or "capability". That certainly should include management talents because after all in traditional Chinese ideas where the male was supposed to dominate the world beyond the threshold, within the threshold, it's the wife, the principal wife who should rule and dominate. That includes a good deal of household management duties, and that certainly necessitates management talents.

(Response) I agree with you, that's why I've already pointed out that one intellectual mentioned that women also need talent to run their families.

(Chair) Let me introduce the next speaker, Dr. Barbara Kaulbach, a fellow countrywoman of mine. She is a sinologist by training and wrote her Ph.D. on the subject of Peking Opera. She continued researching Peking Opera, spoken drama, and street theatre when in Taiwan and has published widely on these topics. In 1982, she joined the Goethe Institute and is, at present, its deputy director here in Hong Kong.

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN CHINESE THEATRE FROM THE CHING DYNASTY TO THE PRESENT

Dr. Barbara Kaulbach
Goethe Institute, Hong Kong

The subject I would like to talk about today is the role of women in Chinese theatre from the Qing Dynasty to the present. Actually, when I finished my Ph.D. I got a grant to study for one year in an opera school in Taiwan. I learnt about the woman warrior and all my teachers there told me, "You see, we have in Chinese theatre what you don't have in European theatres. We have the liberated women, the women fighting with men on the theatre stage, and this you don't have." And so I did my research on this in Taiwan and what I found was quite different from what male lecturers told me (about the role of this woman warrior). I concentrated on this role of women in theatre, not so much on the classical role of obedient, beautiful, humble wives and good mothers, but mostly on this role of the woman warrior and I would like to find out if there are really tendencies of liberation, of liberated women on the Chinese theatre stage. There's another role of the "femme fatale" like Pan Jinlian (Clara spoke about her role already) in Chinese theatre and I'll speak a little bit about her too.

The "femme fatale", as well as the women warriors', life was certainly not that of the average Chinese woman of her time. The behaviour contrasts severely with the traditional role of a woman defined by Confucian doctrine. They endanger the men of their surrounding morally as well as physically - upset their quiet lives, treat them badly, or even kill their husbands like Pan Jinlian - all dreams that certainly many women had throughout the centuries. The widespread popularity of Chinese plays may lead one to presume that the modes of behaviour presented by these women may have had more than a little influence upon the spectators' or readers' way of thinking. It may give rise to the impression that Chinese theatre realized and propagated women's liberty and autonomy. In my contribution now I focus on this impression of mine.

Ou-yang Yu-ch'ien, one of the most famous modern writers on the Chinese theatre, wrote the following passage.

"Traditional theatre, and Peking Opera in particular, contains some remarkable representations of woman generals. Mu Kuei-ying for instance was in command of a whole troupe of mountaineers while still only a young girl, fearing neither heaven nor hell. She disregarded the rules of feudal society, choosing her husband herself; she got the better of everyone who tried to cross her way - even her father-in-law to be, the famous 'Sixth General of the Yang family', was struck off his horse by her. She fought many years to defend her country, sparing no pains. After living twenty years in retirement she quickly and decisively took command again when China was attacked by enemies once more. Such a character appears to be utterly fictitious because she's so unusual in feudal society. The heroine, however, is very convincing."

In Ou-yang's presentation, Mu Kuei-ying protests against social norms. Her choice of her husband (a right traditionally reserved to the parents) and her harsh treatment of her father-in-law, may appear to be the actions of an emancipated Chinese woman. Ou-yang, however, leaves out a few facts that change the picture decisively.

Mu Kuei-ying was the daughter of a former Chinese official who had protested against the ruling Ming dynasty. He was a 'highwayman', so he was out of the society already. For the Chinese woman living in this earlier social system, the 'family' carried a higher value than the concepts of 'nation' or 'fatherland'. So she quite naturally fought on her father's side against state authority, 'disregarding the rules of feudal society', as Ou-yang Yu-ch'ien says.

Mu Kuei-ying's mother, an immortal, had prophesied that her daughter's husband was to be the son of a famous warrior. When Mu Kuei-ying recognizes him in Yang Tsung-pao, the son of General Yang Chi-yeh (a member of the opposing side), she brings about the marriage by cunning and force. She is confronted several times in violent fights with her father-in-law in the struggles that precede the marriage. But she is prepared to give up her hostile position as soon as he acknowledges her as his daughter-in-law. From then on her troops fight on the side of the Yang family, loyal to the ruling dynasty and she herself completely conforms with her new role as wife and daughter-in-law. So - finished with the emancipation.

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN CHINESE THEATER FROM THE CH'ING DYNASTY TO THE PRESENT

[illegible]

The motivation that leads the heroine to fight is an important indicator as to whether there are 'liberating' tendencies to be found in the characters. Mu Kuei-ying, for instance, is motivated first by the model given by her parents, then by the family of her husband. But what are the reasons that make woman warriors who do not come from an 'outlaw' background fight?

Hua Mu-lan seizes arms to replace her old invalid father. As an officer, he still would have to follow the call to arms when enemies invaded the country. She is fighting for reasons of filial piety, and thus her motivation to fight completely complies with Confucian norms of behaviour.

Liang Hung-yu, who had formerly been a singer, joins the army for love of an officer, then learns the art of fighting and becomes a general after a few years. When the war is over, she and her husband, equally highly decorated, live together in harmony with his first wife. Liang Hung-yu's motivation to join the army for love may be regarded as untypical for a Chinese woman, but it may be explained by the fact that as a singer, she was already standing outside social conventions.

The list of woman warriors could be continued with numerous famous names, some of them being even historical. In Chinese as well as in other documents, they're listed under the heading "Paragons of Women" (列女), those who surpassed their male colleagues in bravery and skill in using arms. Apart from the women warriors listed here, there were countless others whose stories were not recorded. In times of war, it was the task of women to defend their children and land against invading hordes of barbarians, while the men were taking part in military missions. Because of this, in troubled times, women were instructed in self-defence. Daughters were often taught the use of weapons by their fathers or by domestic tutors, frequently also by special masters in monasteries. On the one hand this was a source of income for the monasteries that had to finance themselves from their own funds. On the other hand, monasteries were places of refuge in times of war for those who had remained behind so that it was advisable for them to practise methods of defence during times of peace.

It is striking that non-historical woman warriors in stories are attributed to a particular dynasty, which is to say that they are treated as historical persons. It is therefore not surprising that their behaviour is the same whether they are historical or fictitious. After briefly stepping out of the role dictated to them by Confucian doctrine, they quickly resume their former position once the war is over.

None of the woman warriors on the Chinese stage are allowed activities that could potentially bring about social change. If one is looking for woman characters who initiate social change in Chinese theatre, it will not be the Woman Warrior but the 'femme fatale'. In Opera, it's the hua-tan role, the woman swaying 'like a reed in the wind'. She interferes in the action and gains victory over those who are in positions of power in the state by means of her arts of seduction, always subversive and bringing about doom.

This is where the opposition of luxury doll and hard-boiled woman warrior gains a political dimension: the theatre points out the powerlessness and ultimate failure of those who fight with open means in a civilized state and the destructive power of those who gain influential positions by cunning and intrigue.

Even Ou-yang Yu-ch'ien who praises so much the role of Woman Warrior seems to be more interested in this kind of woman in the 'femme fatale'. In his whole production for traditional theatre and spoken drama, or the hua qu, he only uses two classical stories and transform them (from hua qu and Jin qi)into two forms of the classical theatre and the modern theatre of the Pan Jinlian story. (The Beijing opera version was lost but he still has the hua qu version). While in Ou-yang's version the protagonist, the lady, changes from the moralist 'femme fatale' to a poor subject of the Chinese society, a modern Sichuan version goes even further, full of attacks against modern Chinese society. Pan Jin-lian gains the dimension of the average Chinese woman having lots of things to care, and nothing to laugh, about.

But for the Chinese female spectator and reader, the point that deals with her husband, her society was certainly not revenge, but equality; not murder but open fight. For her, the woman she could take as a guideline was certainly, coming to modern times, the woman warrior, not the 'femme fatale'. Compared to the orthodox image of woman, the Woman Warrior indeed shows signs of autonomous action that would be unthinkable for women brought up in the traditional way. To quote Ou-yang Yu-ch'ien again,

"In drama, these woman generals are without question more clever and courageous than men in similar positions. Usually, their husbands are under their command and have to obey their orders. This is what gives it such an extraordinary dramatic and romantic appeal. A kind of ideal is shown here; in a society ruled by men, a representation of this kind is very daring."

Whereas the upper class had to view a woman fighting against men - no matter which weapons she might be using - as an act of heresy and rebellious 'libertinage', the broad masses were not shocked: the woman of lower social standing used to have greater rights to go with the greater scope of her duties. A peasant woman whose labour was vital to the upkeep of the family could claim more say in decisions than a concubine or mistress. Among the different layers of society, the image and role of woman were different. The theatre had to meet the taste of everybody in its productions, both in order to survive materially and to avoid censorship by the government. In this context, the heroine's 'return to the good' at the end of the play or - just as appropriate - her condemnation in case she refused, can be seen as a compromise one had to accept in order to secure the production.

Whether the Woman Warrior is of 'barbarian' or Chinese origin, whether she resigns, withdraws or loses in the end, she can always be sure of the sympathy of the people. Her brave struggle for justice, for family and nation, against exploitation and oppression became a general symbol of ideals and goals in the struggle for life and liberty of the lower classes.

The theatre of Chiang Ch'ing in Maoist China also took advantage of this instinctive sympathy for the brave Woman Warrior, when it propagated plays such as 'The Story of the Red Lantern', 'The Red Women's Battalion', or 'Azalea Mountain'. Here it is highly significant that the heroine no longer is the beautiful woman of the classical stage but the clever Woman Warrior fighting for socialist society.

With the new ideology, the catalogue of virtues has changed, shifting the significance formerly attributed to the two roles: whereas the luxury doll is a product of 'feudalistic' times, the Woman Warrior of traditional stage is viewed as a direct precursor of the revolutionary woman as hailed by Chiang Ch'ing. The parallel to the classical Woman Warrior is obvious: the dominating motivation to fight does not lie in emancipation, but in uncompromising commitment to fulfil an obligation - formerly towards the family, now towards society - if need be even with weapons. Once the objective is achieved, the classical heroine resumes her domestic roles. Only the emphasis changes in socialist drama. Women's 'emancipation' is not one of the central ideals of socialism. Here, too, integration into specific forms of life (this time the socialist variant) is essential: once again, 'duty', 'service' and 'subordination' rate highly.

As Colin Mackerras points out, even the struggle between the sexes seems to be similar to the traditional theatre. He writes about K'o Hsiang, the woman protagonist in 'Azalea Mountain' (Tu-chuan shan):

"Another political issue to emerge from this drama is that of women's status. It is quite common in Chinese dramas of the Communist period for the leading positive character to be female. Nevertheless K'o Hsiang is a new type of heroine. In earlier model dramas there have been runaway slave-girls who joined the revolution, or female Party secretaries in the commune or city organization; but until September 1973 the heroic guerrillas, or military Party leaders, were all men. The significance of the fact that K'o Hsiang is a woman is accentuated by the scenes in which Wen Ch'i-chiu suggests to Lei Kang that he has lost his power of judgement through being too much under the thumb of a woman. This no doubt reflects the problem of equality between the sexes which still exists in China today, even after twenty-five years of Communist government."

In a later play staged 1984, a historical heroine becomes the protagonist of a successful play - Qiu Qin, the woman who rebelled against the Manchu dynasty and was beheaded in 1907. In Wang Yang-mei's play Qiu Qin's emancipation was the same as in traditional books and plays: she did not fight for her own right and liberty but for that of her country and nation.

To sum up, Chinese history possesses a number of important woman warriors, some of which in turn became well known stage heroines: Ch'in Liang-yu, Shen Yun-ying, Hsun Kuan-niang and Chu Shih, to mention only the most popular.

"In drama, these women generals are without question more clever and courageous than men in similar positions. Usually their husbands are under their command and have to obey their orders. This is what gives it such an extraordinary, dramatic and romantic appeal. A kind of ideal is shown here; in a society ruled by men, a reconsecration of this kind is very daring."

Whereas the upper class had to view a woman fighting against men - no matter which occasion she might be using - as an act of heresy and rebellion. Therefore, the broad masses were not shocked: the woman of lower social standing used to have greater rights to go with the greater scope of her duties. A peasant woman whose labour was vital to the upkeep of the family could have more say in decisions than a concubine or mistress. Among the different layers of society, the image and role of women were different. The theatre had to suit the taste of everybody in its productions, both in order to survive materially and to avoid censorship by the government. In this context, the heroine's 'return to the fold' at the end of the play or - just as appropriate - her condemnation in case she refused, can be seen as a compromise one had to accept in order to secure the production.

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With the new ideology, the catalogue of virtues has changed, shifting the significance formerly attributed to the two roles: whereas the loyalty that is a product of 'feudalistic' stance, the Woman Warrior of traditional stage is treated as a direct precursor of the revolutionary woman as hailed by Chiang Ch'ing. The parallel to the classical Woman Warrior is obvious. The dominating incentive to fight is no longer to win emancipation, but is motivated by the same forces: to serve the nation - formerly towards the family, now towards society - if need be, even with weapons. Once the objective is achieved, the classical heroine resumes her domestic roles. Only the emphasis changes in socialist drama: Woman's 'emancipation' is not one of the central ideals of socialism. Here, total integration into the social fabric of the (this time the socialist variant) is demanded once again: 'duty', 'service' and 'subordination' rate highly.

As Colin Mackerras points out, even the struggle between the generations is to be similar to the traditional theatre. He writes about K'o Hsiang, the woman protagonist in 'Azalea Mountain' (Tu-chüan shan):

"Another political aspect to emerge from this drama is that of women's status. It is quite common in Chinese dramas of the Communist period for the leading positive character to be female. Nevertheless K'o Hsiang is a new type of heroine. In earlier revolutionary dramas there have been runaway slave-girls who joined the revolution, or female Red Guard leaders in the countryside fighting for the Communist cause until September 1927 the heroic guerrillas, or military Party leaders, were all men. The new feature of the fact that K'o Hsiang is a woman is portrayed by the way in which, when Ch'ü-sheng is angry with K'o, she is sure that he has lost his power of judgment and through being too angry ignores the tirade of a woman. The drama reflects the problem of equality between the sexes which still exists in China today, even after twenty-five years of Communist government."

In a later play created 1958, a historical heroine becomes the protagonist of a successful play - Ch'iu Chin, the woman who fought against the Manchu dynasty and was beheaded in 1907. In Wang Yang-sen's play Ch'iu Chin emancipation was the same as in traditional legend and poetry: she did not fight for her own rights and liberty but for that of her country and nation.

To sum up, Chinese history presents a number of important woman warriors, some of which in time became well known stage heroines: Hua Mu-lan, Liang Hung-yü, Shen Yün-ying, Liu Kuan-niang and Ch'iu Chin, to mention only the most popular.

Historical as well as non-historical stage heroines (some of whom have in the consciousness of the people become just as historical because of their long tradition) - here I refer mostly to Hua Mu-lan, who has been attributed to Tang dynasty, Sung dynasty and to all the dynasties, so she cannot be historical. And I researched the historical women and the fictitious women and found out that almost half of them are really fictitious. But in the consciousness of most Chinese scholars they are all historical - very strange. They behave in basically the same way: brave fighters in times of war, they resume their woman role at the end of the war.

In spite of this somewhat disillusioning ending, woman spectators sympathize strongly with the woman heroines. The importance of the woman warriors in their eyes presumably does not lie in the fact that women indeed seized arms to defend nation and family; it can more likely be attributed to the realization that, when social requirements compel women to fight (traditionally a man's domain), they are able to prove themselves as of equal value and equal rights.

For a short time, during a war, it is not social origin or sex that count, but courage, intelligence and skill. A heroine who is in command of her male companions by virtue of her exceptional achievements becomes an incarnation of an ideal: the ideal of equal rights for women in a world dominated by men - a dream far older than its embodiment in the form of woman warriors on the stage. Thank you.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(Chair) Well, as Barbara said to me before she started the paper, "This paper of mine will contain good news and bad news." I think what you said in the end was really important, that women after all showed themselves capable of engaging in heroic deeds of valour, of courage, if they were needed. The way they were then later circumscribed by conventions, and so on, is a different matter. What they showed was the potential to do what men could do, so to speak.

(Question) I'd like to jump into the arena even though I haven't studied woman warriors. I think from a child onwards I had watched a lot of Chinese opera, although not in the Peking variety, but Cantonese opera. But I don't want to talk about opera, I don't want to talk about fictional characters, because if we are to talk about the position of women we don't want to talk about anything fictional. We want to talk about reality, and the reality is as I know, or as I've been told by Chinese scholars, that there were no real Chinese warriors in history. Only recently somewhere near Xian they have dug up a skeleton which showed it might be that of a woman who had military weapons buried with her. But that is all the hard evidence we've got. So I wouldn't like really to talk about the courage of women in fighting this or that. One thing is to talk about literature, in which the heroines are women warriors, and I think that is very good as information, as discussion about the value of certain writers in literature, and so on. But to couple that with the position of women in society I think is a mistake.

(Response) I did research where I encountered some women, maybe not many, under the heading of <u>Lienu</u>. Some of them really were described in Chinese as women who were fighting and it wasn't said that they were really generals like Mu Kuei-yin or somebody, but it was written that they took up arms and were leading troops. So I -

(Question) There's a world of difference between legend and history, and what hard historical evidence have you got? You can't just take simply a writer's word for it. How much evidence has the writer produced for his theory, you see?

(Response) Yes, but I think if they were historical or not does not change the spectators' way of viewing them, because I tried to find out if the average Chinese woman was influenced by these models on the stage. I think it is not so important if they were really historical or not, because they are treated as historical.

(Question) People may flock to these operas and plays because it's a woman heroine, but I still think that is not good enough evidence because traditionally the Chinese will flock to see anything. Simply because people go to

see something doesn't mean that it is indicative of their admiration for these characters. I think we ought to go into this a lot more carefully as women, otherwise we discredit ourselves, we discredit our cause.

(Response) Yes, but I did research once before in the Tang Shu as well as in the Wei Shu and so on, (I have the chapters), and under the heading of Liechuan there were these women. A legend?
(Chair) I think it is also important that we talk on other levels, namely the level of perceptions of women, of women's capability or lack of capability, of courage or lack of courage. The way that women were perceived to be and the way that literature reflects certain perceptions of women.

(Question) It depends. Not everything written is literature and not everything that is published is believable. Not every perception is of equal value with any other perception. I may think I see a monkey at the window. Is that perception as valid as no monkey at the window? We must make a difference.

(Question) If I can enter the arena let alone this debate, I think irrespective of whether this is legend or history, we can find plenty of modern parallels for this if we look at South American countries where the women have been very welcomed to join in the revolutions and rebellions that have taken place, immediately when they've finished they actually reverted back to their traditional positions.

(Question) I wish to respond to the first speaker's opinion. As far as folklore is a kind of oral literature, I think it's perfectly possible for us to read the images of women as represented in literature. And I personally feel that mythology or folklore had an important role to play in the structuring of social ethics and also how not only women perceive themselves but also how society perceives women, or perceives the gender roles in culture. So I think it is really a kind of contribution for Barbara to make this sort of study. I don't think we would need to justify whether there's really a Mu Guiying or Hua Mu-lan in history. As long as we see the influence of these gender roles in literature on women - like the woman warrior who was structured almost completely on this mythical figure of the female warrior.

I also have a question for Barbara. To what extent is this celebration of the female warrior a kind of fetishism or a kind of eroticization of women's outlet of energy in order to further suppress them just because they were given a kind of vicarious pleasure in folklore and mythology and that keeps them in place.
(Response) Yes, it's very difficult to say as a westernized woman as we don't have this "woman warrior" on stage. I think maybe you can better (the Chinese brought up in the Chinese society can better) answer this question: how they felt influenced by this model of a fighting woman on the stage.

(Chair) Is there anyone in the audience who would like to take up this challenge?

(Question) I'm from the UK. I think we can compare some of the Western influences, for example, Joan of Arc, and it has been written up by numerous male writers in Britain and elsewhere. The point for me about your talk and the comment made by this lady here, is when we go to theatre, any of us, especially children, we look at roles, (gender, as Daisy said over there). I think it's important to remember that any experience of women can be internalized. The lady here said South American women went back to their domestic roles. I don't believe that they went exactly the same as they were before. (That wasn't what you said, I know, but that was the implication.) I give you an example. In Britain, there was a miners' strike two or three years ago, and a lot of women, miners' wives, who were desperately poor because the government stopped all the money going to them, organized themselves and became a very strong force in British society. Those women have, from outward appearances, gone back to housewifely roles, but they themselves have said they'd never be the same again. We would teach our children. And I think this is the same thing, women going to the theatre, and seeing these images before them. They would never be the same again if they can learn how women can be presented for positive influences.

(Chair) Thank you. I was just thinking when I thought of the importance of particular role models in both cultures, particularly Chinese culture. I was thinking of what happened to the huai nu, the femme fatale, Pan Jinlian. So important is she that in the 80s, there was a re-discovery of Pan Jinlian, and a school of thought which held that Pan Jinlian had to be made to fit a new consciousness of the position of women in the society of the 80s in China. A writer actually sat down to rewrite practically the whole script of Pan Jinlian, turning Pan Jinlian, the femme fatale, the murderer of her husband, the wicked evil woman, into a woman who had little

see something doesn't mean that it is indicative of their admiration for these characters. I think we ought to go into this a lot more carefully as women, otherwise we [illegible] our cause.

(Respondent) Yes, the actual research was before in the Tang Shu as well as in the [illegible] Shu and so on, (I have the chapters), and under the heading of [illegible] there were these women, of legend?
(Chair) I think it is also important that we talk on other levels, not only the level of perceptions of women, of women's capability or lack of capability, of courage or lack of courage. The way that women were perceived to be and the way that literature indicates certain perceptions of women.

(Question) It depends. Not everything written in literature and not everything that is published is believable. Not every perception is of equal value with any other perception. I may think [illegible] the window - is that perception as valid as no [illegible] of the window? We must make a difference.

(Question) If I can enter the arena to share this debate, I think irrespective of whether this is legend or history, we can find plenty of modern parallels for this if we look at [illegible] countries where the women have been very welcomed to join in the revolution, and revolutions that have taken place, immediately when they're finished they actually returned back to their traditional positions.

(Question) I wish to respond to the first speaker's question. As far as folklore is a kind of oral literature, I think it's perfectly possible for us to regard the images of women as represented in literature. And I personally feel that myths or folklore had an important role to play in the structure of social values and also how not only women perceive themselves but also how anyone perceives women, or perceives the gender roles in culture. So I think it's really a kind of investigation for feminists to make this sort of study. I don't think we would need to justify whether there's really [illegible] like Mulan or the Women Generals, as long as we see the influence of these gender roles in literature on women - like the women warrior [illegible] against conformity on the mythical figure of the female warrior.

I also have a question for Barbara. To what extent is this celebration of the female warrior a kind of [illegible] or a kind of overlooking of women's [illegible] of energy, in order to further purposes [illegible] they were [illegible] a kind of women's pleasure in culture and mythology and that keeps them in place.
(Barbara) Yes, it's very difficult to say. At a [illegible] whether women [illegible]. I think maybe you can better (the Chinese brought up in the Chinese system can better) answer the question how they are influenced by the model of a fighting woman on the stage.

(Chair) Is there anyone in the audience who would like to take up this challenge?

(Question) I'm from the UK. [illegible] some of the Western influences, for example, Joan of Arc, [illegible] by [illegible] male writers in Britain and elsewhere. The point for me about [illegible] and the comments made [illegible] is when we go to [illegible] any of us, especially [illegible] we look at [illegible] speaker, [illegible] I think it's impossible [illegible] that [illegible]. I don't believe [illegible]. The [illegible] American women went back to their domestic roles. I don't believe [illegible] but that was the [illegible] of independence. [illegible] women [illegible] and [illegible]. We [illegible] women going to the theatre, and [illegible] women can be [illegible] for positive influences.

(Chair) Thank you. I was just thinking when I thought of the importance of particular role models in each culture, particularly Chinese culture. I was thinking of [illegible] the female [illegible], and a school of thought [illegible] in the [illegible] a new consideration of the position of women in the society [illegible] the whole range of [illegible] a woman [illegible] into a woman who had little [illegible], the female [illegible].

other choice, given the feudal constraints. And she is seen in this modern Sichuan version as a victim of society, who encounters on stage other victims, like Anna Karenina, like Sha Sha from a popular contemporary novel, and so on. So, Pan Jinlian is actually re-modelled in order to reflect more accurately a new stage of consciousness of women. I think that suggests the great importance that these images do have for us.

(Response) I just thought of an example. We have the same stories or similar stories in xiao shuo (classical novels), or in the modern novels, and we even have this now in Mainland China. All over the country there are old men who are reciting these stories. So it's not always only in theatre that women hear of these stories, but they are exposed everywhere to these stories, even on television. So I think it must be a strong influence.

(Question) I was thinking about another playscript, in Cantonese opera, Liang Zhu, where we have a woman, in order to obtain educational opportunity, she dressed herself up as a man. For me that's a very liberating kind of experience because she went to school where all the males were, and the teacher said, "Women and the rascals are the most difficult to deal with". And that's very provocative, because suddenly you see all that what Clara said just now, regarding perceptions and nature, and suddenly you find yourself in a position in which you want to defend yourself but can't.

Recently I've seen this play in Hong Kong and the kind of ambiguity is very interesting. That's perhaps another gender role ambiguity which we can think about.

(Response) Is that the Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai?

(Questioner) Yes.

(Question) I think that regardless of proofs as to women warriors in Chinese culture or in Western culture, certainly in the West there's been an awful lot of women's literature focusing on how we as women are affected by what cultural stereotypes are available to us, and certainly one of the first ones I ever came across was the very famous Germaine Greer dichotomy between witch-bitch and virgin mother. And those two were your main choices really. Sounds ridiculous, I mean as a woman you're basically allowed a choice to be this kind of harlot or else you're going to be stuck with your hands in the sink at home, and your kiddies and everything, waiting for your husband to come home. But it is an interesting point how we determine - how these things really do affect us as audiences or members of the population, male and female. You know, males are receiving these prototypes just as much as we are. Perhaps this workshop - the title I think is very opportune - how history becomes nature - you can battle over how much some of these things are really historical, but they do affect us. But then maybe we have to get down to some harder work - how is it that they actually affect us? What women did you hear about that made you feel you had another opportunity to be different in your life, etc. Maybe the historical method just has to be taking individual case histories, because that's in a way our only proof in showing how for you individually this, you know, affects you.

(Chair) Thank you.

(Barbara) I just want to make a last contribution. When Die Leiden des jungen Werther (J. W. von Goethe) appeared in China, there were lots of suicides, and when the new version of Die Leiden des jungen Werther appeared - this time written by an East German author - there were lots of suicides in West and East Germany. So literature indeed influences people.

(Question) ...I think the theatre has always been a channel for protest against society, but at a very low level. I think if we think of culture as graded into high culture, medium culture and low culture, in China opera is very low culture. If you think of the way people attended the opera in the old days - they didn't just sit there like we do in the City Hall, really quiet and nobody smokes and nobody enters in the middle of a performance - everybody just drifted in and out and you bring your tea and your dinner and everything, and you chat with your friends and you sit with your back to the stage, and you really didn't pay a lot of attention. It's so much, in a way, part of everyday existence that you don't make a big deal of it. And I think some people do go there for a moment of erotic escapism - as an oppressed woman, she might for that half an hour enjoy watching this very unusual woman warrior. But when she leaves the opera she goes back to her normal life. And the level of internalization is very difficult to determine. But certainly, whatever value that she gains from that hour or two

emergence, much backward conforming, [illegible] such as a Molière [illegible] who encounters [illegible], The Prime Minister [illegible]. We find from a popular [illegible] novel, and so on. So what [illegible] accurately a new stage of consciousness [illegible]. I think that suggests the great [illegible] these images do have for us.

(Response) I just thought of an example. We have the same [illegible] or similar stories in xiqu (Classical opera) or in the modern novel, and we have [illegible] in socialist China. All over the country there are [illegible] who are reading these stories. [illegible] that are exposed [illegible] a strong influence.

(Question) I was thinking about another [illegible]. [illegible]

[illegible]

(Response) Is that the [illegible]

(Question) Yes.

(Question) [illegible]

[illegible]

(Thank-you)

[illegible]

[illegible]

18

hours of performance has to be pitted against the indoctrination of high culture of what a woman should be. Because we must remember the opera doesn't only have the liberated woman but also the liberated men - the robbers and highwaymen, and the people doing a lot of unorthodox things. So I think, to a lot of people attending the opera, they probably have an admiration for all these marginal characters of society, but at the same time, because of how they had been indoctrinated on a much deeper level, somehow they know that this is really not culture, that this is not the real thing.

(Chair) Our next speaker is Susanna Hoe whose strong feminist convictions are reflected in her numerous publications on subjects that range from biographies of public figures to women travellers in the 19th century and women in colonial settings. In Hong Kong, where her husband came to teach in April 1987, she is working on <u>Women of Old Hong Kong: Expatriate Women in the British Colony 1841 - 1941</u> - a subject which led her to being asked to take part in this workshop.

THE WAY WE WERE: How much have expatriate women in Hong Kong changed over 150 years?

Ms Susanna Hoe

Let me draw you a picture of the mind. It's 1839. For years a growing community of mostly British women married to East India Company employees and other merchants have lived a life of relative comfort in picturesque Macao. They are aware of difficulties between their husbands trading in Canton and the Chinese Imperial Government but they are taken aback in August to hear that Chinese Commissioner Lin is coming to Macao to sort out the Opium problem. The Portuguese Governor of Macao cannot guarantee their safety. They receive an order from the British Plenipotentiary, Charles Elliot (whose wife lives among them). Drop everything, take to the boats, men, women and children. You will find refuge on the merchant ships riding at anchor, waiting for the new trading season, in a harbour 40 miles away.

That harbour was, of course, the one we see out of the window here and I often sit on my balcony and look out at the ships there now, and they become misty (because I haven't got my glasses on), and I cast my mind back 150 years. CAN YOU IMAGINE WHAT IT WAS LIKE? August in Hong Kong, a cramped sailing ship...

That imagined scene was part of the inspiration for the book I'm writing - the working title of which is Women of Old Hong Kong: Expatriate Women in the British Colony 1841-1941 - as distinct from the title of this paper 'The Way We Were: How much have expatriate women in Hong Kong changed in 150 years?' There has been some intermingling of these two titles on various circulars - but it's of no consequence. My paper covers a longer period than the book - at least as far as conclusions are concerned - and has more of an obviously feminist slant. And, of course, my book won't be published for a couple of years. My research is about half way through - a relatively early stage. That is a good thing rather than otherwise because my contribution today is part of a workshop, not a lecture. I look forward to your contribution to my thinking. Some of you might even be aware of material, particularly unpublished letters or diaries, that I do not know about. And there are recurring names in the history of Hong Kong. You may know descendants of the families that have lived here throughout the period, or who have returned here. Names such as Lind, Holliday, Wise, Innes, Hancock...

I don't want to take too much time scene setting but some points are important to the story. I was a little anxious about the reception I might receive when it became known I was writing an aspect of Hong Kong's history. I am a relative newcomer here (18 months). Hong Kong is known as a rather inward-looking place; it's masculine history is full of feuds. I know that I am qualified to write the book because of my past work on women's history. Others don't. I also thought there might be a feeling that I was intruding upon the territory of others. I didn't have any doubt about the need for the book.

I was both right and wrong. On the whole local scholars and historians have been friendly and helpful. I would happily have accepted that at face value except for one response which makes me wonder if the warmth doesn't sometimes contain a grain of dismissiveness concerning the subject matter. A conversation has been reported to me - not said to my face, so I cannot be sure it is entirely as spoken - that makes two interesting points. 'Why', this person asked, 'is she writing about expatriate women - THEY DIDN'T AMOUNT TO MUCH?' And then with fine illogicality, he continued, 'And why is she writing about expatriate women and not Chinese women?'

Is there anyone here who needs me to give an answer to either question? No, I wouldn't have thought so (Perhaps you will ask me a question which I will answer in the discussion afterwards - the answer may be contained in what I am going on to say).

Even though, at the beginning, their numbers were comparatively few, if expatriate women were here, whatever they did or didn't do, they are a part of history. But they have been almost totally excluded from the record of Hong Kong's history.

If you look at any of the history books, you may find the odd half line devoted to a woman: Lady Bowring eventually dying as a result of the poisoned bread incident of 1857; the frame of Lady May's chair being hit by a bullet intended for her husband in 1912. This is partly because the history of Hong Kong is a public history and the lives of its expatriate women were, on the whole, at least in the nineteenth century, private. But

THE WAY WE WERE: How much have expatriate women in Hong Kong changed over 150 years?

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That harbour was, of course, the one we see out of the window here, and I often sit on my balcony and look out at the ships there now, and they become other (because I haven't got my glasses on), and I cast my mind back 150 years. CAN YOU IMAGINE WHAT IT WAS LIKE? [illegible] in Hong Kong, a community waiting with [illegible]

That imagined scene was part of the inspiration for the book I'm writing - the working title of which is Women of Old Hong Kong: Expatriate Women in the British Colony 1841-1941 - as distinct from the title of this paper 'The Way We Were: How much have expatriate women in Hong Kong changed in 150 years?'. There has been some intermingling of these two titles on various documents - but it's of no consequence. The paper covers a longer period than the book - at least as far as [illegible] - and has more of an obviously feminist slant. And, of course, my book won't be published for a couple of years. My research is about half way through - a relatively early stage. That is a good thing rather than otherwise because my contribution today is part of a workshop, not a lecture. I look forward to your contributions to my thinking. Some of you might even be aware of material, particularly unpublished letters or diaries, that I do not know about. And there are recurring names in the history of Hong Kong. You may know descendants of the families that were here throughout the period, or who have returned here. Names such as [illegible]

I don't want to take too much time going through the same points as [illegible]. I felt a little anxious about the reception I might receive when it became known I was writing an aspect of Hong Kong's history. I am a relative newcomer here, [illegible]. Hong Kong is known as a rather inward-looking place. Its expatriate history is full of feuds. I knew that I was qualified to [illegible] women's history. Others don't. I also thought there might be a feeling that I was intruding upon the territory of others. I didn't have any doubts about the need for the book.

I was both right and wrong. On the whole local scholars and historians have been friendly and helpful. I would happily have accepted that at face value except for one response which [illegible]. The remark doesn't contain a grain of condescension concerning the subject matter. A conversation has been reported to me - not said to my face, so I cannot be sure it is correctly as spoken. But [illegible] 'Why,' the person asked, 'is she writing about expatriate women - THEY DIDN'T DO VERY MUCH!' And then with fine illogicality, he continued, 'And why is she writing about expatriate women and not Chinese women?'

[illegible] (Perhaps you will ask me a question which I will answer in the discussion afterwards.) The answer may be contained in what I am going on to say.

First though, in the beginning, [illegible] expatriate women [illegible] they have been almost totally excluded from the record of Hong Kong's history.

If you look at any of the history books you may find [illegible]

even when women started to speak out in public their part has been ignored - sometimes in the most obvious way.

The researcher often looks first in the index of a book. You will look in vain for women. Lady Lugard is subsumed under Sir Federick Lugard; Mrs. Haslewood under her husband. Stella Benson and Phyllis Harrop merit the odd footnote but there is no entry in the index. I shall be coming back to those four women.

I've suggested that throughout the period women led a private life, though increasingly less so. I'm now going to make another distinction. I think there is a difference historically between the lives of married women and single women. And this begins, I think, to fit in with the title of this workshop: HOW HISTORY BECOMES NATURE.

I think we can all probably agree that Victorian women were conditioned to behave rather like Victorian children - to be seen and not heard. They were treated like the women in the index of Hong Kong's histories - they were no longer individuals: they were part of their husbands. If you look at the directories for the early years of Hong Kong you will see lists of men's names. It does not say if they were married or not, let alone if their wives were living here, which quite a few were.

I think I've got to distinguish, too, between middle class and lower middle class or working class women. There were in the early years of Hong Kong some women who were not wives of administrators or merchants and they sometimes engaged in trade, mainly as milliners and dressmakers. And there were expatriate prostitutes. I have no intention of dismissing them from my book but for reasons of time I will have to put them on one side in my paper. (We can, of course, discuss them later.)

So, I am first of all dealing with middle class married women who were not expected to work, nor have any other public activity outside the home. What was life like for them?

First of all, they were far from home and their families and everything else that was familiar. We all know what the climate is like - Today we have electricity, fans, air conditioners, dehumidifiers, fridges. Fever was rampant, mostly malaria, and later, plague. Public hygiene facilities were poor. There were no plants or trees at the beginning, though gradually the island became as beautiful as we know it today. Security was appalling - muggings, robberies, piracy. Until quite late even women carried guns. For all those reasons their children, assuming they survived infancy, were sent home to England from about the age of eight. Their husbands were at work all day, running the colony or making money, or both. The Hong Kong Club was founded as early as 1846 and was the centre of men's social life. Men gradually began to mix with Chinese business men, as the opportunities for the latter developed. There were servants but in some ways that made women's lives more without purpose. Amahs were the only Chinese women expatriate women met - not necessarily through racial discrimination but because those middle class Chinese women who lived here led very much more secluded lives than the expatriate women. Expatriates of both sexes were discouraged from learning Chinese. (Pre-1841 the Chinese Imperial Government had forbidden it.)

It has often been suggested that these women idled their lives away gossiping, bitching, going on picnics, playing games. Yes, I'm sure they did all that. But I would like to be a bit more <u>positive</u> about how they survived. I believe that they indulged in what today we call <u>sisterhood</u>, that there were networks of women friends who provided a support system that helped them when they were ill, or just low, and sustained them when they were well. There is no time to go into much detail about this but let me just give two examples to show what I mean. One example is inward looking; the other begins to look out, though still to the expatriate community rather than the Chinese.

The first is the founding of the Ladies Recreation Club. The leading light in that 1883 event was Louisa Coxon who had already broken out of the Victorian wives straightjacket by appearing on the stage of the Amateur Dramatic Club in 1879. She wrote to Hong Kong's Colonial Secretary asking for a piece of land to build a women's club for recreational purposes. After some tooing and froing, including derogatory remarks by civil servants in the margin of the request, it was eventually granted.

There are two interesting features: one is that the original letter was signed by <u>18</u> women. You can picture them, can't you, during the months that led up to the writing of that revolutionary letter. And I don't

use the word facetiously. The other is the realization of the need for somewhere for women to take exercise. Thereafter networks of women used to meet to play tennis - as they do today - and keep themselves healthy, as well as cement the personal relationships that were so important to their emotional well being.

The other outcome of a group of women relating was the founding in 1889 of the Hong Kong Ladies Benevolent Society. The objective of the society was to introduce method and organization into the ladies' charitable efforts among European members of the community. Help was to be given to the sick, the most needy and the most deserving, passages back home or rents were paid, children left orphans or destitute were maintained at school, employment was found, and temporary help was given to many who were going through a crisis.

I have quoted there from a new book Matilda: Her Life and Legacy by Joyce Smith. Matilda Sharp was not only the inspiration (after her death) for the hospital that bears her name but was also one of the founder members of the Ladies Benevolent Society. To us today their work seems rather one dimensional - but death and crisis were very much a feature of expatriate lives and it is to their credit that they got together to do something about it; the Chinese community was not part of their lives.

I want to turn now to single women. I know that married women here will not take offence, bearing in mind the lives of Victorian wives as I have just described them, if I call this category women with a purpose. I think the distinction is historically important and still has some relevance to Hong Kong today. To begin with, they were mostly missionaries or nuns and they came out to Hong Kong in their own right to work. Another distinction is that their purpose was often to be involved with the local Chinese community. Some of them came out as the result of an initiative of Mrs. Smith, the wife of the first Bishop of Victoria. She appealed to the Society for the Promotion of Female Education in the East to send out teachers for a new school to be called the Diocesan Female Training Institute. Among the first three teachers to arrive in 1860 were the Misses Boxter, Magrath and Eaton. They were the beginning of education for girls, particularly Chinese girls, in Hong Kong. Later many teachers came out to religious schools of all denominations and then to Government run schools. In 1904 there were three women government teachers, in 1940, 33. In 1904 there was one Government nurse; in 1940 there were 75. Then came the stenographers; in 1940, 20 of them. By 1940 too, there were 6 expatriate women doctors and in 1938 the first two JPs were appointed (both doctors). The first practising woman lawyer does not appear until 1953.

Here I must make a diversion which, on the face of it, appears to argue against the point I have been making. For, of course, there were missionary wives and they were certainly not idle. I've already mentioned the Bishop's wife, Mrs. Smith. Mrs. Gutzlaff ran a school for blind girls in Macao and later transferred to Hong Kong. The second Mrs. Legge - the first died here - describes entertaining 20 and 50 lonely British soldiers to tea, and 200 Chinese to dinner. But, actually, the missionary wives tend to prove my point. They were expected to work; they were part of their husband's team, which exhausted them, but also rewarded them, in a way that was denied to their secular sisters.

With the turn of the century comes a change of key. We can see secular married women begin to look outwards from the expatriate community into the wider society. I'm going to call this category Married Campaigners.

If we can see today the rump of the Victorian wives without a purpose, and the further development of the single woman who comes here for a job; I think we can see just as clearly the daughters of the early campaigning wives - those who, when they had a chance to take an initiative, to get their teeth into a cause, blossomed in an impressive way. Today, too, in spite of our supposedly more caring and concerned society, they are very often going against the grain, against the interests of business or government policy. (examples: those women who work with Vietnamese refugees, and Judith Mackay)

I'm going to read you a passage from a book called Britannia's Daughters which is not only the other half of the inspiration for the book I'm writing but which I think adds weight to the case I've been putting forward.

How many of you have heard of FLORA SHAW? And how many of LADY LUGARD?

Flora Shaw, for those of you who do not know the name, was an influential late nineteenth century expert on Africa and a senior journalist. She was asked to join the London Times - the first woman - and immediately became head of the Foreign Desk, created by her. In 1902, at the age of 44, she married Sir Frederick Lugard. Joanna Trollope writes:

"Sir Frederick was made Governor of Hong Kong in 1907 and Lady Lugard was a triumphant success at his side, entirely refurbishing the official residences, entertaining wonderfully and imaginatively, dealing with great flair with 'this red carpet business'. Government House was 'a plethora of princes' and even though her health was now always poor, she pronounced her life 'delightful'."

Trollope continues,

"'But Lady Lugard could never, inevitably, recapture Miss Flora Shaw. We were entertaining at Osterley,' Lady Jersey wrote after Lady Lugard's death, 'a number of representatives of foreign colonial dependencies in addition to certain Evelian friends, among them were Sir Frederick and Lady Lugard, who had recently married. After dinner the Belgian and Dutch representatives, between whom Lady Lugard had been seated, came up and asked me in some agitation, 'Who was that woman who was so impressive?' i.e. in her knowledge of African and Congo politics. 'Lady Lugard,' I replied. 'She was Miss Flora Shaw.' 'What, the great Miss Shaw!' exclaimed our friends, throwing up their hands as an indication that there was no more to be said."

Flora Shaw Lugard merits one line in Endacott's history of Hong Kong. It concerns the founding of the university, known as Lugard's brainchild or, by those, almost everyone, who was against it, as his 'pet lamb'. Endacott writes: "Personal appeals by Lady Lugard brought in sums from British and Chinese alike before Mody's offer expired on 31 December 1909." Lady Lugard is not in the index. But, it is clear, without her, there would have been no University of Hong Kong, at least not in 1912.

Endacott hints at the story but the hint only means anything if you know the details. Homusjee Mody, an Indian merchant and philanthropist was almost the only person who was convinced of the merit of the Lugard plan - and he was convinced by Flora. He said he would put up half the money but the rest had to be found by the end of the year because he knew he did not have long to live. Local business houses failed to respond; the Colonial Office was against the plan. Flora was in London recovering from an operation. She not only convinced Lord Crewe that the British Government should support the plan but that it should put up some money. She did the same at the London head offices of the major Hong Kong firms. She also worked among her contacts in England on getting Mody a knighthood to encourage his commitment. Lugard wrote to his wife in December 1909: "All my other public schemes have been my own ... this is yours. I took it up at your strong instigation. Mody ... knows how keen you are about it, and he has a profound admiration for you. If it goes through to success the credit will be yours."

Flora Shaw Lugard is evidence that wives in Hong Kong (even Governor's wives) were not expected to be public figures; and evidence too that a woman of intelligence, spirit and determination, given a chance to put those attributes to good use, does so.

The university was controversial in its day but it was not cutting across the bows of Chinese culture - except when it allowed women in, after a great deal of debate, in 1921. But the other campaigning wives were. I don't think I can start to discuss here whether or not they had the right to interfere - it is, again, perhaps something for our discussion later.

The first campaign was against footbinding. Mrs. Archibald Little, the wife of a Hong Kong merchant based in Shanghai, arrived here on a whirlwind tour of Chinese towns, and Hong Kong and Macao in 1900. She was president of the Natural Foot Society which was already securing large numbers of Chinese followers, both men and women, in China. Her first meetings were addressing men and boys. But then it was agreed that she must talk to the women. That was difficult. Footbinding was strongly established and, as I have said, although girls were starting to go to school, middle class women led very secluded lives.

Lady BLAKE offered to hold the meeting at Government house. No Chinese woman had ever crossed

its threshold as a guest before. Miss Blake offered to be the Hong Kong Branch secretary; the Admiral's wife was also involved. They made grand preparations in the ballroom but they were prepared for no one to turn up. 200 women came. By the end of the meeting several of them had committed themselves to the often excruciating process of unbinding.

The next campaigner is Mrs. Haslewood, wife of the superintendent of the Naval Chart Depot. She went to Church at St. John's Cathedral in October 1919 and heard about the Mui Tsai system - what the campaigners were to call child slaves. We have at least one expert on Mui Tsai system among us - Maria Jaschok, whose book Concubines and Bondservants will appear here any day. So, if anyone doesn't know the details of the Chinese custom of the daughters of poor families becoming members of rich families as servants, I'm sure Maria would be glad to elaborate.

Mrs. Haslewood was appalled when she heard about the system and on November 4, 1919 an open letter from her appeared in several local papers. But she was rocking the delicate boat of British rule - particularly the policy of non-interference in Chinese custom - and the Governor, Sir Reginald Stubbs, was furious. He asked the Commodore to tell Commander Haslewood to restrain his wife. Haslewood refused and he was transferred back to England. Undaunted the Haslewoods continued their campaign, securing the support of the Anti-Slavery Society, many prominent people and Parliamentarians.

The campaign was waged, on and off, for 20 years or so, for there were many ramifications. In England the Haslewoods were consistently part of it; in Hong Kong, of course, it became an almost totally Chinese campaign: the Anti-Mui Tsai Society was formed in 1921 and had a woman on the committee; it was said to be the first occasion on which a Chinese woman spoke in public.

It is difficult to separate entirely the Mui-Tsai campaign from that against licenced prostitution because one of the arguments against the Mui Tsai system was that the same young girls were sold into prostitution.

The leading campaigner for the abolition of the registration of brothels, prostitutes and brothel keepers was the novelist Stella Benson who spent two years here from 1930-1932 when her husband James O'Gorman Anderson was posted to Hong Kong as a deputy commissioner in the Chinese Customs Service. Stella, an Englishwoman, despised most of the British in Hong Kong, they were too concerned with being Ladies and Gentlemen, were not interested in China, never read books or talked about anything but the games they played. But it was the corruption and idiocy connected with licenced prostitution that was her main concern.

Again the Governor, this time Sir Andrew Caldecott, was furious and the success of the campaign is still seen by some as a mistake. Various people, even today, as reported by Paul Gillingham in his book At the Peak blame various women. Lady Clementi, the Governor's wife until 1930, is blamed; Mrs Wolfe (married to an inspector general of police), Mrs Tratman (married to the Secretary of Chinese Affairs), and Lady Southorn (wife of the Colonial Secretary) are all blamed. I have not met these women elsewhere yet, but Stella Benson's report based on her own visits to brothels is part of the League of Nations archives (unavailable until 1995) and it was that body's pressure on the British Government that was most influential. Stella was greatly helped by Mrs Forster, who ran a school for former prostitutes - all of whom had been Mui Tsai - in Yau Ma Tei for twenty years; a letter from her also played its part in the outcome of the campaign.

I don't know yet the reasons for the other women's stand against licensed prostitution but Stella Benson was no Mary Whitehouse or sexual moralist - she was concerned at the appalling lives and exploitation of prostitutes and the false sense of health security felt by the men, mostly young servicemen, who used them.

After both those campaigns, including a commission to investigate slave trafficking, in 1938 the Hong Kong Government appointed a Lady Assistant Secretary to the Secretary for Chinese Affairs. Her role was to look after women and children, including prostitutes and Mui Tsai. Phyllis Harrop, a divorcee who had recently left the troubles in Shanghai, was chosen and tells us all about it in her book Hong Kong Incident. She thought she was to be a glorified secretary - but from her first day she was disabused of that. So she set about teaching herself Cantonese and the relevant law and on her own initiative she instigated lighting raids on brothels where she not only rescued Mui Tsai who had been sold as prostitutes but broke the organizations involved. (She also received numerous death threats.) She is the only woman on the 1940 Civil Service List, apart from the doctors,

hospital matrons and headmistresses, at executive level. The war came into the middle of her work and life, as it did into those of all the people in Hong Kong in December 1941. [And I think that date is where a historical study usefully ends.]

I had stopped there in the preparation of my paper before the conclusion. It seemed a natural place. But I had a rivetting telephone conversation yesterday evening with a protagonist in the 1960s equal pay battle - Betty Mair - and I can't end this account of campaigning expatriate women without mentioning Theresa Bone, the radical headmistress of Belilios government girls' school between about 1958 and 1966. When Betty Mair arrived in Hong Kong to teach at the school in 1959, women in the Civil Service received 75% of men's pay which, of course, affected benefits such as housing; they also lost their pensionability on marriage. The Government, once again, was taken aback by the persistence of female campaigners. And it was, as so often in the past, a battle which drew in local women, in this case the rising cadre of civil servants. Y.C. Lau, for example, became much involved. This is a story still to be recorded - it will unfortunately fall outside the scope of my book.

I've made some links between the past and the present as I've gone along but I think it's time now to draw the strands finally together. I have described the lives of expatriate women over the first 100 years or so of Hong Kong's history - inevitably rather generally. I've divided women into 3 categories: Victorian wives, single women with a purpose and married campaigners. I've drawn a positive picture in some ways of the behaviour and attitudes of the women themselves. I felt that the historical image of expatriate women in Hong Kong as gossiping, superior idlers needed to be redrawn.

But the picture is not all positive. None of those women had any public power; none played any part in mainstream political affairs or policy. They were conditioned not to expect it nor to seek it.

For all the disadvantages Chinese women still face today, at least they have made that breakthrough. It is no longer appropriate for expatriate women to do so - they have, so to speak, been cut off in their prime and left, I feel, rather at a loss, except perhaps for those who come here, like their male counterparts, to enjoy the benefits of the business community.

But I'd like to end on a truly positive note. In one area expatriate women have firmly started to outgrow their female and imperial conditioning and Hong Kong's history. It may be that Chinese women today find attempts in the past to help them patronising - I don't know. But as I look round the room here now I can see something special - the possibility for expatriate women to work with and relate to Chinese women as equals, and as sisters.

(Question) How difficult have you found it to get some of the sources particularly in looking at those women who've been invisible, like Lady Lugard and others - have you got a lot of information from people who -

(Response) Well, Lady Lugard isn't a problem actually because there's plenty of material about her - there's a biography about her - and actually I bumped into a couple of American academics in Oxford who are writing a new biography of her, and then of course there's Margery Perrin's immense work on her husband which gives a lot of material about her. She's not the problem, it's all the others. There's also a biography of Stella Benson, a good one, although it needs a lot of updating and that's not possible till her papers are released. But what I've concentrated on so far is trying to get unpublished letters and diaries - can something be difficult if it's fun? I don't think so. It's been a lot of work - I've written an awful lot of letters to try and track down material - it's coming in slowly. But there's something pleasurable about tackling a field that's untackled previously: you're not tredding in muddy puddles all over the place, so "difficult" is not a word I would use.

(Question) There's a lot of interesting material in the archives of the London School of Oriental and African Studies about the wives of missionaries. There's marvelous stories and I don't think they have been published at all.

(Response) When you say in the archives can you be a little more specific?

(Question) Well, you see, the London Missionary Society which came out to China long ago -

(Response) ... It's not a difficulty with missionary materials than with others. ...

(Question) Cecilia Young of Hong Kong Council of Women. When Susanna mentioned about the present - I'm more interested in the present, well, how history tells us what's reflecting now - but when you say that expatriate women in fact no more can play a part, it's so sad to hear that, because we (The Hong Kong Council of Women) are capturing the 'women with a purpose' and 'the married campaigners' if I may use your words, and it's still very much an on-going process, and in fact people like Maria who are sitting here - the whole workshop - in fact is given birth to this. Although I am feeling the pressure that the expatriate women are not actually the local women, how would they know what's happening here, but in listening to the history so far in fact Hong Kong expatriate women are playing a very vital role in Hong Kong - did play a vital role. But I do want to hear more from the local people and see how we can work together in future for the women's movement because I don't see ... that there should be any race barriers or class barriers. Thank you.

(Chair) I think some of the issues you just raised will be further developed this afternoon.

(Question) I wondered how unpopular your work was when you researched into this topic - were you met with a lot of scorn? Because this topic seems to me often to be objectified in that way, because when you look back at the attitudes to these women as with women in India, they're always pictured as the witch-bitch type of person even though they had almost no power - or if they did have power it's omitted from the history books. In this aspect there's sort of a link with Barbara's paper in that women are polarized in this way: they're either thrust into the role of being a witch-bitch or thrust into the role of being the virgin mother, and there's always this attempt to do this to any woman who comes to the fore, even though it doesn't fit into the actual picture at all when you dig into the past and find out that there's no correspondence at all. I wonder if you found this in people's attitude towards you when you did this research - are they sort of confronting you?

(Response) No. Actually the only attitude like that was the one I talked about - the person who was alleged to have said "Why is she doing this, they don't amount to much". So far, most of my correspondents and the people I've seen in England and mostly families who are descendents of the women concerned, and they couldn't have been more incredibly hospitable, welcoming and helpful - that's been one of the joys of the work. I left the Hong Kong angle until later, literally I've just started on it, partly for practical reasons as I want to get a contract signed before I went along and said "look I'm writing this book", actually to forestall the sort of attitude towards me that you're describing might exist. But so far I'm not finding it apart from that one person. And, as I implied slightly in my paper, it could be that some people - and I've got to be careful here because there're people in this room who've been awfully kind - I'm not referring to them, obviously, but perhaps the kindness and sort of friendly welcome that I'm beginning to experience is because they don't see me as a threat. Perhaps I'm being cynical, I don't know, I'll keep you posted.

(Question) I wonder if I could follow on with that. Why do these attitudes - these forcing women into these two types of polarized straight-jackets? Why have they arisen, I wonder. If you look at the way that women are depicted in the media who are famous, for example Margaret Thatcher, she's not described in the same terms as a male politician is described - she's usually caricatured more and thrust into this sort of nastier role that I described.

(Response) We couldn't choose another character to discuss, could we?

(Question) Well I do agree with you about that. But ... I'm reminded of what Meryl Streep said when she was asked to play the part of some nasty women, she said she couldn't do it because she would be seen as emblematic of all women. This doesn't seem to happen to men. It seems to me there's a huge spectrum of characters they can fulfill, whereas women seem to be thrust into one end or the other.

(Response) My own quick reaction to this is that that's how to keep women down, isn't it, by that sort of stereotyping, and particularly the divide and rule bit. If you can divide the witch-bitches against the virgin mothers, then you can control women better, can't you? ... I'd like to hear what other people have to say about it.

(Response) ... It's not a difficulty with [illegible] women's [illegible] with others.

(Question) Cecilia Tsang of Hong Kong Council of Women. [illegible] about the [illegible] I'm more [illegible] in the [illegible] expatriate women in [illegible] of Women) are [illegible] and it's [illegible] workers - in fact [illegible] actually the local women, [illegible] fact Hong Kong [illegible] want to [illegible] because I [illegible] Thank you.

(Chair) I think some of the [illegible] this discussion.

(Question) I wondered how [illegible] were you not with a lot of scorn? Because the [illegible] when you look back to the attitudes to those women [illegible] which type of person even though they [illegible] In this aspect there's sort of a [illegible] into the role of being a [illegible] and there's always the attempt to do this [illegible] picture at all when you dig into the past and find out [illegible] people's attitude towards you when you did [illegible] of condemning you?

(Response) Yes. Actually [illegible] the person who was alleged to have said [illegible] and the people I've seen in England and [illegible] wouldn't have been [illegible] Hong Kong [illegible] implied slightly [illegible] people in this room [illegible] and sort of friendly [illegible] I'm being general, I don't know. [illegible]

(Question) I wonder if I could follow on with [illegible] forcing women into these two types of [illegible] at the way that women are reported in the [illegible] in the same terms as a male politician [illegible] role that I described.

(Response) [illegible]

(Question) What I do [illegible] when she was asked to play the [illegible] of all women. This doesn't seem [illegible] they can fulfil, whereas [illegible]

(Response) My [illegible] by that sort of stereotyping, [illegible] against the single mothers [illegible] about it.

(Question) I was interested in your topic - you've mentioned mostly British women. I was just wondering if you were interested in expat women from Asian origins or people from European origins.

(Response) Yes, I'm interested in any expatriate women, I had to obviously confine in 25 minutes - But... are there any Asian women apart from the one or two wives of diplomats?
Indians? Yes, of course..... It's interesting that so many Chinese women were expatriate in the sense that they came from China to a British colony, that figures of women who were born in Hong Kong are very few until quite recently. So, I got to be a bit careful with my limitations. And the obvious reason I'm not including Chinese women is that I'm not Chinese, I don't read Chinese, I don't speak Chinese.

(Question) I was just interested to find out whether or not you found that the women were just being ignored or when they were really mentioned, they were portrayed in a rather nasty light. I was thinking of a comparison with A Passage to India in Foster's novel when he does talk about the expatriate woman there - he completely savages them: they come in for far worse treatment than the men. I was wondering if that had been your experience when you were doing your research.

(Response) Yes. I think on the few occasions when women are given more than a half-line, then that is the reaction, and I try to redress that a bit in my paper - it's those two things: either a half-line, "Lady Bowring" or "Lady May" , or describing society as a whole, because Hong Kong's social history is actually seen in a very derogatory way. The British behaviour in Hong Kong is always drawn in an unattractive way, and therefore women form part of it. I'm not saying that it wasn't that at all, but that it's too simplistic, one's got to look at the other side as well.

(Question) I was interested in one topic - you've mentioned early British women. I was just wondering if you were interested in Asian women from Indian origin, or mainly from European origins.

(Response) Yes, I'm interested in any expatriate women, I had to obviously confine it to 15 minutes - But... are there any Asian women apart from the ones as part of any army of diplomats? Indians? Yes, of course... it's interesting that so many Chinese women were adaptable to the point that they came from China to a British colony, with [illegible] of women who were born in Hong Kong are very few [illegible] quite recently. So, I got in for a lot earlier with my [illegible], and the Chinese women I've got [illegible] Chinese women is that they use Chinese, I don't read Chinese, I don't speak Chinese.

(Question) I was just interested to find out whether or not you found Chinese women were just being ignored, or when they were really mentioned, they were [illegible]. I was thinking of a conversation with a Chinese in Hong Kong [illegible] - in comparatively [illegible] they [illegible] as far as [illegible]. I was wondering if [illegible] had been your experience when you were doing your research.

(Response) Yes, I think on the [illegible] that is the question, and I try to analyse that [illegible] or 'Lady May', in describing women as a [illegible] in a very derogatory way. The British behaviour in Hong Kong [illegible] women form part of it. I'm not saying that [illegible] the other side as well.

CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES

Dr Linda Koo (chair): OPENING NOTES

... First of all I'd like to summarize a little bit about what happened this morning. We were discussing mainly the historical trends of Chinese traditional stereotypes as well as some of the problems faced by expatriate women in Hong Kong. We can see that the basic theme is one of where Confucian principles demanded that women be obedient, submissive and chaste daughters, wives and mothers; they were always basically inferior to men, restricted from physical movement by the practice of footbinding, not allowed to develop mentally through education, not allowed to remarry after the death or divorce of their husbands, not given an inheritance, and the stress that women had to bear was so great that for many we know that the recourse was basically one of suicide - in fact, studies of Chinese women from Taiwan have indicated that Chinese women had among the highest suicide rates in the world in traditional China.

So the question is to what extent is this legacy of cultural and institutionalized subordination of women still applicable to Hong Kong today? Footbinding was banned by imperial decree in 1902, but is the wearing of high-heels also a modified version of bound foot? Are male children still preferred to female children? Do males enjoy preference in terms of jobs, promotion, education, salaries? Some of the answers to these questions will be discussed this afternoon by some of the speakers, and perhaps from the audience.

From available evidence from observations of contemporary Hong Kong society, most of the traditional restrictions on women have been mitigated. Hong Kong, an urbanized and modernized society, has been influenced and changed by women's rights movements from the West and from China herself. Most girls receive now some schooling, although less than boys; while brothers are encouraged to continue into higher education, their sisters are told by their parents that they should find work as soon as possible after they have finished the legal minimum of education, to help support the family, and their brothers going through university. The earnings of female employees also average less than males, even for similar jobs; sexual stereotypes still portray woman as homemaker and man as breadwinner. Does Hong Kong still have some distance to cover before true equality of the sexes is achieved? Today we shall discuss some of these issues in our afternoon session.

Our first speaker will be Dr. Catherine Tang, who received her Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from Texas. She's presently working in the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and I think some of her research work is quite interesting. She's working on issues of working women - about bodily complaints of working women, whether that's representative that women cannot withstand the stress of work, and also other general issues. The issue of working women is a double-edged sword: on the one hand women now have two jobs - both to take care of domestic problems and those of the working environment - and sometimes the sword is to attack career women saying that they're sicker than housewives. On the other hand we know that there's this problem which we call in occupational therapy 'healthy worker effect', that there is a natural selection that healthy people will be working; on the other hand there's been studies of other places which indicate that women who do work feel more fulfilled and more independent and therefore are happier. Anyway, there are of course controversies in this issue. Dr. Tang today will be discussing one of the worst extremes of how women are treated - the issue of sexual assault and physical violence against women in Hong Kong.

SEXUAL ASSAULT AND PHYSICAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Dr. Katherine Tang
Department of Psychology, Chinese University of Hong Kong

Rather than hammering on the unhappiness of present-day women, I'd like to speak on how we resist and how we gather our power to improve our quality of life and to fight against some of the disadvantages.

The first thing I'd like all of us to look at is the sexual assault against women - in other words, rape.

In 1977, there was a War on Rape campaign in Hong Kong and it had been quite successful. At that time, the committee involved the Hong Kong Council of Women, the Family Planning Association, Samaritan Befrienders, Community Health Project of the United Christian Medical Services, and the Salvation Army, with the goal to provide services to victims, training and social action, advocacy and social action and research. Now, what have they achieved so far?

Let's first look at how we provide services for rape victims. We try to focus on the rape-victim after-care services. During 1977, the Family Planning Association launched the service as a separate unit with specialized counsellors and medical personnel providing immediate aftercare including the 'morning-after' pill for the victims, a risk test for pregnancy and VD, supportive counselling for the victim and her family, and also including referral for legal abortion, adoption, psychiatric treatment and criminal injuries compensation. And, in addition to that the Samaritan Befrienders also include a telephone hotline for the victims, and most of the professionals came together and compiled a bilingual manual for counsellors of rape victims, in which information on medical, legal and psychological aspects of rape were included, and also provided guidelines on physical and psychological assistance for the rape victims.

Besides providing services to the rape victims, we also try to train and provide public education, because at that time the committee was aware that there was quite a myth and misconception about the whole idea of rape. So they prepared a series of workshops for professionals and para-professionals, talks to the general public, secondary school teachers and students, also organized community talks and seminars - all these with the goal to de-mystify rape and create a general social awareness of this problem. There was also a mass media coverage of the whole campaign.

In response to this campaign 'War on Rape', there are several things which we have achieved so far. In 1978, a Crimes Bill was passed to amend the law relating to rape. Since then the previous sexual history of the rape victims is no longer required as evidence to be produced during the trial. In 1981, we were also talking about the possibility of legal abortion being extended to the rape victims. We also tried to increase the eligibility for compensation not so much to do with the monetary aspect but with the wish to make known to the public that rape is like other violent crimes. And the victims deserve compensation. That's the main idea we wanted to convey. We tried to advise the media when they reported rape cases to refrain from sensationalism and respect the anonymity of the victims and so far it has been doing quite well, that is, until recently. (So this workshop comes just in time to raise the social awareness of this issue again.)

Before we launched the campaign, the statistics on rape were considered a secret - it was very hard to get access to them. But since then, statistics about rape victims are released by the Police and sometimes by the Family Planning Association. I think if we are trying to provide services to the rape victims, having access to the statistics is very important because we want to know under what situations and circumstances they occur, and what is the nature of the rape.

In response to all the hard work on the War on Rape campaign, we have come to the general conclusion that in addition to the above actions and strategies, there is another way to tackle the problem. That is to look at the community approach in order for the resources to come together. We established the Women's Centre with the goal of promoting women's development in general and we want to provide telephone information, a referral source, a resource library, and educational programmes, so that the women are more aware of their rights and social issues, and of their body in general. (Sometimes women also have myths about themselves)

Let's have a quick look at the recent statistics released by the Police.

Rape Victim Seeking Help from Family Planning Association (FPA)

	1983	1984	1985	1986
No. of cases reported to the FPA and police	49	56	46	42
No. of cases reported to the FPA but not to police	56	41	33	22
No. of cases reported to police but not to FPA	29	31	34	30
% seeking help at FPA but not report to police	53	42	41	34

Compared with the number of reported cases for rape in 1982 and 1986, there's not much increase, but let's look at the prosecution rate for rape. In 1982 it was 48%, that means for 100 persons brought to court, only 48 were successfully prosecuted for committing the crime. And in 1986 the rate increased to 69% and that's good news because it's very traumatic and painful for the victims to bring their attackers to court, and if the prosecution rate remains low, it's very discouraging. It would convey to the public that in order to avoid the traumatic experience, in order to avoid all the hard work, better keep it a secret and think it's just your misfortune. Now the increase in prosecution rate is very very encouraging for us. It shows that there's more social awareness that rape is a serious problem, and the prosecution rate is pretty high.

Police Statistics

		1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Rape						
	reported	79	78	87	80	72
	prosecuted	38	33	45	51	50
	prosecution rate	48%	42%	52%	64%	69%
Indecent Assault						
	reported	784	778	768	801	808
	prosecuted	388	399	368	430	419
	prosecution rate	49%	51%	48%	54%	52%

But on the other hand, in the case of indecent assault, as you can see the number has increased from 784 cases in 1982 to 808 cases in 1986; the prosecution rate remains steady around 50%. Now this is of concern us because indecent assault is generally seen as a less serious crime than rape, and if the prosecution rate is so low people are generally unwilling to bring it to the police and to court. It's doing a lot of injustice to the victims

and it covers some of the negative societal attitudes about indecent assault and makes it an even lesser crime. From my personal point of view indecent assault is as violent a crime as rape - a physical aggression towards women. I think during the discussion period we can talk more about indecent assault.

I would like to bring out some discussion points on rape. While 10 years have elapsed since the War on Rape campaign, what have we achieved so far? What are the areas that we still need to improve?

With regard to the increasing number of case of sexual assault (especially indecent assault) and consistently low prosecution rate (only 50%), should we launch a similar campaign like rape, e.g. War-on-Indecent Assault, especially at public transportation stations e.g. MTR, KCR? In a recent survey by the Women's Centre (1987) there are a lot of under-reported cases of indecent assault committed at MTR stations and in the trains.

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The next tragic thing we are looking at is wife abuse incidences. These are the statistics released by the Social Welfare Department (SWD) and the year here only represented cases up until March of that year.

Social Welfare Department Statistics

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
Marital Conflict	2680	2165	1177	1102	1969	2684	2580
Battered Wife	-	-	18	90	221	319	340
Family Problems	3764	4306	4807	5097	4243	5069	5427
% Battered Wife among Family Problems	-	-	0.4%	1.8%	5.2%	6.3%	6.3%

If we look at the Battered Wife classification, even the SWD has not formally classified these incidents until 1983, and there were only 18 cases reported in that year. In March 1987 there were 340 cases reported, and the proportion of abused wife cases in relationship to family problems also rose from 0.4% to 6.3%. As we can see from March 1983 to March 1987, there was a 20 times increase in the number of wife abuse cases reported at the SWD. I suspect, as all of you may have suspected, these cases are severely under-reported and under-represent the true cases of wife abuse. Why is that so? We have to look at the special nature of wife abuse.

Wife abuse occurs within the family. Within the family there are specific roles and status organized on the basis of age and sex, rather like working in a company when roles and status are organized on the bases of competence and ability. The second point is, there is a long-standing implied right of males, and especially husbands, to use force. I think that we've covered this point this morning, that in Chinese families wives are still regarded as their husbands' properties. The third point is the commitment to family makes it difficult for the victims to leave, especially when they have children and especially if the children are young. The fourth point is, within the family, there's high emotional involvement which is prone to conflict. The fifth point is that physical violence in the home is a natural and private matter. You never hang your dirty linen out in the public. The sixth point is that family is a highly stressful environment, and it creates a lot of frustration and conflict. I suspect I should add a seventh point. With the changing role of women nowadays, a lot of conflict is created - wife and husband may have a pretty tough time in adjusting to the new roles of women nowadays.

We hope to do something for these tragic incidences. Researchers have noted that "the level of feminist organization in a state is a significant determinant of the number of wife abuse services in that state." (Kalmuss & Strauss) So let's look at what we can provide for these unfortunate women.

In general, there are hotlines and crisis intervention centres which are not specifically dealing with wife abuse cases. But there are places and phone numbers you can call in cases of emergencies. Unfortunately, a lot of these professionals are not specially trained for dealing with wife abuse cases, and a lot of them are still having myths and mis-conceptions about wife abuse.

In addition to that, we also have some specific services providing for abused wives. In 1985, the Harmony House was established with the joint effort of various feminist groups. This is the first shelter for abused wives. Up until the middle of 1987, they have already provided shelter for 630 wives and children, and about 300 families have sought help from Harmony House. Around the same time the Domestic Violence Ordinance was introduced to allow for immediate court order to stop assault or harrassing the spouse: and a husband can be arrested if the injunction is broken. This is the Ordinance, but how is the legal system carried out? How much help can this Ordinance provide to the victims? That has to be discussed later also. With my experience working in the SWD last year, the Ordinance was there, but a lot of women were not aware of it. When they were aware of it, they sought help from the police. The police gave various reasons that unless they were hit by their husbands they could not do anything about it. Because the law says, husbands can be arrested only after the injunction is broken.

Around 1985 and 1986, there was increased social awareness of the seriousness of this kind of physical aggression toward women within the home. The first government-run woman shelter was established in December 1986, against the general inertia of the government. It has spaces for 40 women, not just for abused wives. It also includes a shelter for abused children and also for problem female teenagers, aged between 13-21. Up until March 1987 (within three months) there were already 34 persons seeking help. I'd like to leave it at that; during the discussion we can all talk about some general ideas, such as :

1. What are the influences of the traditional Chinese patriarchal culture on our attitudes towards wife abuse? What are some of the myths and misconceptions that we need to dispel?

2. Is societal assistance to the abused wife adequate? Up till now there are only two shelters for women.

3. What are the needs of the abused wives? If we're going to help them, how can we best help them?

4. Does the general public, and the professionals have adequate information about the wife abuse phenomenon? What are the myths, beliefs and attitudes?

5. What can we do to fight or combat this tragic phenomenon?

Well, I'd like to end here.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(Question) Depending on whether women are married or not, is it domestic violence rather than rape?

(Response) I think very unfortunately in Hong Kong husbands have an inordinate access to wives sexually. I don't think there are any reported cases or official statistics on that area. So I could conclude that up till now the public still has the attitude that if the husband wants to have sex with the wife, he can have it, and it is not rape, even if the wife is not consenting. I don't know what others think about it.

(Chair) It's still a remnant that the wife is the property of the husband. In Canada and the United States, there has been a law on that, and it's beginning to be accepted that if consent is not given, it is still rape even though there is a marriage as such existing. So this is just a beginning, and it will be interesting to see what its consequences are.

(Question) Do you think that under the Ordinance you commented on the fact that the sexual history of the woman is irrelevant has led to this recent case where the judge apparently thinks it's appropriate to comment on it during sentencing, which I find quite extraordinary.

(Response) Actually, I don't know what's in the mind of the judge but I think if the recent case were presented 10 years ago, the accused would have been free now. So I think that has an important impact on how the case was determined, how the case was disposed.

(Question) I think there's another side issue that's quite different but somehow attached to this: this is abortion, because in some cases you can only receive abortion if having been raped. So this is very interesting when it comes to the case within the actual marriage, especially if the husband doesn't want the child. I know, for example, in Ireland where I grew up, I can't say how many of the Irish population have been conceived by the man coming home Saturday night drunk. The women being beaten, then raped, and she not necessarily wanting the eighth, ninth, tenth of these occurrences! It hasn't been really made much of a link as yet, but (I think families are a bit smaller here) especially in a Catholic country where there are many large families, the women may just not want another child (without getting into a debate about pro-abortion, choice or not).

(Question) Of the figures you presented, do you know how many of the prosecutions were successful? The indecent assaults have a very low prosecution rate. I suspect that the successful rate for conviction is extremely low and this might be the reason for the low prosecution rate because the police discourage the victims from continuing with it, because the chances of the accused being convicted are minimal in these cases.

(Response) There are no statistics on that but from my working experience at the SWD last year, those who were successfully prosecuted for indecent assault were very seldom convicted. They were sent to the psychologist for voluntary counselling, or put on probation for nine months, twelve months, the most. I don't know how representative it is. But from my experience, most of those accused of indecent assault were prosecuted, and very seldom got convicted.

(Question) If people want to start a campaign on this point (which is certainly needed), one of the groups of people to be aimed at should be lawyers. There are quite a few laws which <u>cause</u> this very low conviction rate. For women who've been the victims of sexual assault, the judge has to warn the jury or to warn himself that he shouldn't convict unless there's corroboration because women are notoriously not to be believed. Now the usual attitude among lawyers is that if the woman is complaining about sexual assault then it's to be dismissed because it's notoriously easy to bring such an accusation. And of course it's very difficult to corroborate because usually there's nobody else present. This is the reason you can't get a conviction. Somebody has to try to do something about this.

(Response) I think even if there are people present, for example indecent assault during the busy hours at the MTR, there are a lot of people present but nobody comes forward. I think your point is very good, for we not only have to educate the public, but the professionals such as doctors, lawyers, police - all of them need to be re-educated to dispel some of the myths and misconceptions.

(Question) One question I'd like to ask which I haven't heard anyone comment on yet is a related issue, and that's of sexual harrassment in the workplace. Certainly indecent assault would fall into that category. Do you have any information, any awareness of research that's been done in Hong Kong on that subject?

(Response) I think in 1985 the Hong Kong Council of Women did a survey on the general picture of sexual harrassment within the working environment, and quite unexpectedly, quite a large number of women came forward and responded that they have been harrassed in their workplace but they have never reported to the police or to anyone else. Maybe we can talk about it more afterwards.

(Chair) OK. The next speaker is Ms. Mona Lo. She was trained in the University of London and has training in healthcare and development and received her M.Sc. in Medical Sociology. She's worked for 10 years as an administrator in the Kwun Tong Community Health Project, and also is a District Board member. So she has very good experience working with grassroots women and working with volunteers involved in self-help projects. Ms. Lo will be talking today on the relationship of grassroots women to the community.

(Question) Do you think that under the Ordinance you commented on the fact that the sexual history of the woman is irrelevant but in this recent case where the judge apparently thinks it's appropriate to comment on it during sentencing, which I find quite extraordinary.

(Response) Actually, I don't know what's in the mind of the judge but I think if the recent case were prosecuted 10 years ago, the sentence would have been less severe. So I think that has an important impact on how the case was determined, how the case was disposed.

(Question) I think there's another side issue that's quite different but somehow attached to rape: this is abortion, because in some cases you can only receive abortion if you've been raped. So this is very interesting when it comes to the case where the actual marriage, especially if the husband doesn't want the child. I know for example, in Ireland where I grew up, I don't say how many of my Irish acquaintances have been conceived by the man coming home Saturday night at ... The women have no choice, they're raped, and they are necessarily carrying the eighth, ninth, tenth of these pregnancies. It hasn't been really made much of a link as yet but [illegible] families are a bit smaller generally in a [illegible] where there are fairly large families, the women may put up with another child (without getting [illegible] abortion, sterilization, choice or not.

(Question) Of the figures you presented, do you know how many of the prosecutions were successful? The indecent assaults have a very low prosecution rate. You said that the arrest rate for conviction was extremely low and this might be the reason for the low prosecution rate because the police discourage the victims from continuing with it, because the chances of the accused being convicted are minimal in these cases.

(Response) There are no statistics on that but from my working experience of the SPCO last year, those who were successfully prosecuted for indecent assault [illegible] expected. The response to the government for voluntary counselling, or [illegible] for more [illegible] quickly, the more, I don't know now representation if so. [illegible] from the community, and [illegible] of individual [illegible] and very seldom got convicted.

(Question) If people want to draft a campaign on this issue, which is certainly needed, what are the groups of people to be aimed at, should be targeted? There are quite a few laws at the moment that cover the conviction rate. For women who've been the victims of sexual assault, you might want to make the public aware that there could be [illegible] couldn't convict unless there's corroboration [illegible] additionally and so [illegible] the local attitude among lawyers is that if the woman is complaining about sexual assault then it's to be discounted because it's notoriously easy to bring such an accusation. And of course it's very difficult to corroborate because usually there's nobody else present. This is the system you don't get a conviction. Somebody has to try to do something about this.

(Response) I think even if there are people [illegible] cases, for example indecent assault during the long [illegible] of the MTR, there are a lot of people present that will take courage to stand forward. I think your point is very good, but we not only want to educate the public, but the professionals such as doctors, lawyers, judges - all of them used to be conditioned to [illegible] some of the myths and misconceptions [illegible].

(Question) One question I'd like to ask which I haven't heard anyone comment on and it's a related topic, and that's of sexual harassment in the workplace. Certainly, sexual assault would fall into that category. Do you have any information, any statistics of [illegible] that have been [illegible] in Hong Kong over the years?

(Response) I think in 1985 the Hong Kong Council of Women did a survey on the general picture of sexual harassment within the working environment, and quite unsurprisingly, quite a large number of women being harassed and responded that they have never [illegible] in their workplace but they have never reported to the police or to anyone else. Maybe we can talk about it more afterwards.

(Chair) OK. The next speaker is Ms. [illegible] Lo, [illegible] in the University of London [illegible] nursing [illegible] and development and [illegible] her M.A. [illegible] medical [illegible] work [illegible] very good experience working with women [illegible]. Ms. Lo will be talking today on the [illegible] women in the community.

THE RELATIONSHIP OF GRASSROOTS WOMEN TO THE COMMUNITY

Ms. Mona Lo
Kwun Tong Community Health Centre

First of all, I'd like to thank the Committee for inviting me today. I'm very glad to have this opportunity to share with you some of the lives of grassroot women. I'll try to share with you the experiences of 5 different women. The first one is an ideal wife in the eyes of her husband. Since the case histories are real human beings, it will not be convenient for me to use names, and I have to change some of the details otherwise it becomes too obvious, and some of them may be somebody you know.

The Ideal Woman

Let's take the example of Mrs. A. Mrs. A is perceived by her husband as an ideal wife. Mr. A. himself is an independent transport worker. We had some discussion over what he perceived to be an ideal wife and so on. He takes pride in being able to look after his wife and their three children without having the wife go out to work to supplement the family income. He said that his wife is probably the best choice he could ever have made. I asked him how we managed to get his wife in the first place - whether it was an arranged marriage, or free love. He said he was working in Taiwan at that time, so it was his own decision, or his free choice.

I asked him what was so good about this wife - why didn't you take a local Chinese lady? He said the local Chinese ladies are too extravagant, probably too liberated. My wife is good because she's very nice to my parents, my mother likes her, she doesn't talk much, she always agrees to things, and she always does the things that I like her to do. She seldom goes out - she has hardly any friends. And then I said she sounds to be quite a lady. Is there anything which you want her to do different? He said, Well, I'd like her to be a bit less dependent on me. I asked, What do you mean? He said, I'd rather that she doesn't ask me to take the children to see the doctor with her, at least she could find her own way there.

Then we went on. He said, besides, she's too fond of her own family. She keeps harping about going back to see her own parents. Then I discovered that this lady has not seen her parents almost since the day she left Taiwan, which was about 8 or 9 years ago. That was his picture of an ideal wife.

I tried this same thing on a number of men. I discovered that essentially they were very similar, young and old. They all like to have the wife at home - as a good mother, as a good wife, and as a good daughter-in-law; and not try to have her own opinion about things too much. Of course she'd be respected and consulted on important issues like sending a child to school, etc. Otherwise it is better that she behaves like a good wife. I asked, What do you mean by behaving like a good wife? Then they said, Well, my mother would like her to stick to traditional virtues of obedience, submission ... and the kind of virtues described this morning.

These young men of course say she could do what she likes, but "If I can afford it, I'd rather that she doesn't work," because it's more important that the children be brought up in a more acceptable way in the sense that the children have high grades at school, and be properly dressed, and cleaned up, etc. Unfortunately, this is the situation at the place where I work. And I work in a lower socio-economic community in Kwun Tong with the majority of people living in public housing estates - over 80% of them - then we still have 30,000 to 40,000 people living in squatter estates. It's slightly below the Hong Kong average in terms of income. So the outlook is in a way, for young and old, still fairly conservative. That's the idea of the ideal wife, or ideal woman.

The Woman for Cohabitation and the Double Standard of Morality

Our next example is a woman for cohabitation. This is Miss B. I got to know Miss B one evening when I was visiting a Mutual Aid Committee. (In public housing estates, government would like to develop some kind of neighbourhoodliness and tried to get people together to look after their own affairs. Initially it was to fight crime and to keep Hong Kong clean. Now it has other functions as well, such as promoting a sense of belonging, etc.) I had this opportunity to visit these Committees, talking to people about their problems in their blocks of

housing. Suddenly a woman in her early thirties rushed in and was shrieking for help. She was rather incoherent but what she was saying was something to the effect that her own parents were chopped up by her brother and sister-in-law and she wanted us to help her get them into an institution for the elderly right away. She said the social worker at the Accident and Emergency Department of the Hospital told her that they had to go on the waiting list. She feared that by the time there was a place, there would be nothing left of her parents, if they remained where they were. She could not put them up herself for personal reasons.

She was invited to provide me with further details the next day. With a little help here and there, it was not difficult to find her parents institutional care within a week or so. But the problem had more to do with this lady. When I asked whether she could stay with her parents for a few days, she said, I have to tell you the truth, I have been co-habitating with a man, and he's already threatening to leave me. Besides, my three children all have one problem or another. The older boy has behaviour problems in school and is attending a Psychiatric Out-Patient clinic. Even the baby boy, three years old, has already had adjustment problem and is attending the same clinic. And then this little girl ...-She was afraid that this man with whom she was co-habitating had evil intentions on the little girl. So she was actually in a pretty mess herself. I asked her how she managed to survive, and she said - part-time job, public assistance, or with whatever man she was with at the time, he would bring back some money. - So it turned out that all those children belonged to different fathers.

Then I asked her why she did not marry one of them. She said that no man would ever want to marry her because she had co-habitated with so many men, and had children of different fathers. So that was the situation: a typical case of a double standard of morality that this lady was servicing. This problem of single-female parent has become quite evident now, particularly where we are. I don't know how much you know about this. In other parts of the world this is not a major problem because ladies can handle it as there would be sufficient support. But in Hong Kong, its pretty tragic, I shall say, I have more sympathy with her than her parents whom we can look after. With her, there will be very tough problems for you to think about in terms of women's issues.

The Model Mrs.C

Mrs. C is in her forties. She had little formal education when she was a girl. As a devoted wife, mother and daughter-in-law, she never had the opportunity to finish secondary school or further education. But this lady gives us a lot of hope in a way because with the founding of the District Administration Scheme, women and housewives have the chance to work together alongside men to prove how much they can do.

When I first saw her ten years ago, she was a very timid lady, quite uncertain of her abilities, and she was very shy and insecure about trying anything new. When I see her now, she is very different. She is confident and is even seeking elections into various government boards and committees. In fact she has become quite articulate, and some might say, a little bit too aggressive to men's liking. Anyway, she certainly was socialized through community involvement, which I found is really a good thing because there women with little education have proven that they are just as capable as any man. I don't know whether the men would agree with me, but I think they really have capability, regardless of their educational opportunities. In a way, women's groups, like the Hong Kong Council of Women, (though they have not yet got into all the public housing estates, but then women's groups like the Yin Ngai Society, women's groups of the voluntary agencies and Kaifongs, all provide such opportunities) - they are really very good in helping women who had no opportunity whatsoever of formal schooling, but they have this sort of informal education in the community via this involvement or volunteering. They have become new human beings and I find that is very important and should be encouraged.

Then if we look at the life history of another women, we see the burdens, the anxieties, and guilt in self-development. The other one is more spontaneous as she got into community involvement with her husband's support.

Mrs. D - Burdens, Anxiety, and Guilt in self-development

This Mrs. D is a younger woman in her thirties and the mother of two teenage children. She had a difficult life. She never finished her secondary school - she had to finish it through night school. But then this lady is quite determined to so something about herself, she even got herself trained as a nurse. Then she had

housing. Suddenly a woman in her early thirties rushed in and was shrieking for help. She was rather incoherent but what she was saying was something to the effect that her own parents were chucked up by her brother and sister-in-law and she wanted us to help her get them into an institution for the elderly right away. She said the social worker at the Accident and Emergency Department of the Hospital told her that they had to go on the waiting list. She feared that by the time there was a place, there would be nothing left of her parents, if they remained where they were. She could not put them up herself for personal reasons.

She was invited to provide me with further details the next day. With a little help here and there, it was not difficult to find her parents institutional care within a week or so. But the problem lied more in the lady herself. When I asked whether she could stay with her parents for a few days, she said, I have to tell you the truth, I have been co-habiting with a man, and he's already threatening to leave me. Besides, my three children all have one problem or another. The eldest girl has behaviour problems in school and is attending a Psychiatric Out-Patient clinic. Even the baby boy, three years old, has already had adjustment problem and is attending the same clinic. And then the little girl — she was afraid that this man with whom she was co-habiting had evil intentions on the little girl. So she was actually in a worse mess herself. I asked her how she managed to survive, and she said - part-time job, public assistance, or with whatever man she was with at the time, he would bring back some money. - So it turned out that all these children belonged to different fathers.

Then I asked her why she did not marry one of them. She said that no man would ever want to marry her because she had co-habited with so many men and had children of different fathers. So that was the situation: a typical case of a double standard of morality that this lady was carrying. The problem of single-female parent has become quite evident now, particularly in certain areas. I don't know how much you know about this. In other parts of the world this is not a major problem because ladies can handle it as there would be sufficient support. But in Hong Kong, as pretty much as I should say, I have some sympathy with her that she has parents whom she can look after. With that, there are certainly tough problems for you to think about in terms of women's issues.

The Model Mrs. C

Mrs. C is in her forties. She had little formal education when she was a girl. As a devoted wife, mother and daughter-in-law, she never had the opportunity to finish secondary school or further education. But this lady gives us a lot of hope, in a way because with the founding of the District Administration Scheme, women and housewives have the chance to work together, alongside men, to prove how much they can do.

When I first saw her ten years ago, she was a very timid lady, quite uncertain of her abilities, and she was very shy and nervous about speaking up. When I see her now, she is very different. She is confident and is even seeking elections into various committees, boards and committees. In fact she has become quite articulate, and some might say, a little bit too aggressive in some things. Anyway, her capacity was actualized through community involvement, which I think is really a good thing because these women with little education have proven that they are just as capable as any man. I don't know whether the men would agree with me, but I think they really have capability, regardless of their educational opportunities. In a way, women's groups, like the Hong Kong Council of Women, (though they have not yet had any of the public housing estates), but then women's groups like the Yuk Hsin Society, women's groups of the Kaifong associations and Kaifongs, to provide such opportunities - they are really very good in helping women who had no opportunity whatsoever of formal schooling, but they have this sort of informal education in the community via this involvement in volunteering. They have become new human beings and I find that is very important and should be encouraged.

Thus if we look at the life history of [illegible] women, we see one [illegible], determination, and goal in self-development. The other one is [illegible] in her community involvement with her husband's support.

Mrs. D - Burdens, Anxiety and Fears in Self-development

This Mrs. D is a younger woman in her thirties and the mother of two teenage children. She had a difficult life. She never finished her secondary school - she had to finish it through night school. But then the lady is quite determined to do something about herself. She even got herself trained as a teacher. Then she had

a job and she saw the other colleagues around with university degrees, so she was burning with desire to acquire some sort of tertiary education. So with the support of her husband - a very understanding person - and financial support of the organization, she was admitted to a part-time program in an institute of higher learning.

There she took three years to complete the program and she did quite well. But then the sort of anxieties and guilts that you could see - all the pressures on her - she has to cope with her work, her family, her children, her husband, her in-laws; and then she has had to cope with not being at school for many years and not having the sort of formal schooling. But when given the opportunity, she did very well. I can foresee that a lot of talents in the community have not been tapped - a lot of potential for contribution to the community, for self-actualization. A lot of them would like to, as this lady demonstrates, but she is so ridden with guilt. As soon as she finished with work, all the psychosomatic things came out and she started to be sick and had to be hospitalized, etc. People of course, were very helpful and supportive, so she was O.K. very soon. Then she was going to study some more because she found that academically she could do rather well.

She was all happy about going on to study. Then suddenly one day she told me that she had decided to resign from her job and stay at home to help her children. Then I asked why, since she had been discussing all those degree programs that she was going to do. She said, Well, it's simply because I feel so guilty about my two children. They're already teenagers, I hope that they will have the opportunities that I never had. I want them to have good school results so that they can do well and train in a profession, etc. Her children were only about 11 to 13 years old. She believed that by staying at home she could make up for all the lost time that she failed to spend with them while doing her part-time program at the institute. You can see her anguish and anxiety and all the guilt as she said, I just couldn't carry on those things for myself, because my place is at home. Now I'd better spend all my time looking after those children.

The Vicious Circle

Though it sounds rather irrational, in a way, it only points out the burdens, anxieties, and guilt that women faced when they try to develop themselves. When we look at men's attitudes toward this, it's just like a vicious circle. One male employer who employs all men - even junior typists and secretaries - said that you shouldn't really invest in women, because even if you provide them with overseas training, they'll come back and tell you that they are going to get married. As soon as the first child is born, they say their husbands can look after them and their child. Then they will give up their jobs to look after the baby and their in-laws, just like that. So it's all investment lost. Why should we give these opportunities to women and not to men who are more committed to work?

I'm not surprised I have that sort of experience myself. The woman is the first one to go home when the child is ill; the first one to go when the husband is ill, or when an in-law is ill, mother's ill, father's ill, ... somebody died, somebody came back from abroad,etc. You never know when they're coming to work, as this male boss says. It's a vicious circle. How are we going to help the women to break it if they have the opportunity to develop themselves and to contribute, etc. In other words, women have two jobs: full-time at home, full-time at work. So how can they cope? It's a vicious circle that requires a lot of support from us - men, women, ourselves. There's a lot of women against women because of the in-law problems.

If we look at the last example of a mother-in-law, there's some hope. As I said, all should help.

Mother-in-law

This mother-in-law's case was referred to me by a caring housing department officer. I was amazed at how caring they could be because one day he called and said that one of their housing tenants kept trying to commit suicide, and he didn't know what to do. I asked why she wanted to commit suicide and he said it was those in-law problems again. She didn't fit into any of those welfare programs so it was difficult to refer her. So I said we could try and think about something. In the end we thought that we could try to get her mother-in-law, through one of the neighbours, to come to the social centre so that we can have functions and programs together.

Since she had been drawn out, she enjoyed the company of the other women who shared similar

a job and she saw her other colleagues around with university degrees she was thinking with desire to acquire some sort of tertiary education. So with the support of her husband - a very understanding person - and financial support of the organization, she was admitted to a part-time program of the Institute of English language.

There she took three years to complete the program and she did quite well. But then she sort of anxieties and guilts that you could see - all the pressures on her - she had to cope with her work, her family, her children, her husband, her in-laws and the guilt she had to cope with not being at school for many years and not having the sort of formal schooling. But when given the opportunity, she did very well. I can foresee that a lot of talents in the community have not been tapped - a lot of potential for contribution to the community, for self-actualization. A lot of women could have taken the task, desire and fear, but they are confronted with guilt. As soon as she finished with work, all the housework and things were left out, she wanted to be a good wife and had to be inspirational, etc. People in general were very helpful and supportive, so she was O.K. very soon. When she was going to study some more, however, she found that she really did not know [illegible] and could not cope very well.

She was all happy about going on to study - then suddenly one day she told me that she had decided to resign from her job and stay at home to help her children. Then I asked why, what she had been discovering all these degree programs that she was going to do. She said, 'Well it's alright because I feel unhappy about my two children. They're already teenagers. I know that they will have the opportunities that I never had but I want them to have good school results so that they can do well and come to a profession, etc.' Her children were only about 11 to 13 years old. She believed that in support of home she could make up for all the lost time that she failed to spend with them when she had her part-time program at the institute. I saw how got her anxious and anxious and all the guilt at the work, "I feel [illegible] carry on everything for myself, but now my place is at home. Now I'd better spend all my time looking after those children.

The Vicious Circle

Though it sounds rather irrational, in a way it only points out the anxieties, anxieties and guilt that women faced when they try to develop themselves. When we look at people's attitudes toward this, it's just like a vicious circle. Like most employers who employ all men - men from a tertiary and secondary - said they very shouldn't really invest in women, because even if we provide them with a chance to study, they'll come back and tell you that they are going to get married. As soon as they first child is born, they say their husbands can keep after them and their child. Then they will give up their jobs to look after the family and there is just, just like that. So it's an investment lost. Why should we give these opportunities to women who are not so keen who are more committed to work?

I'm not surprised it very much out of experiences as well. The woman is the first to give up work when the child is ill, the first one to go when the husband is ill, or when an in-law is ill, members of family, etc. I sometimes think, somebody came right from elsewhere. You never know when they're coming to work, so they must have work. It's a vicious circle. How can we expect to keep the women to invest in and even have the opportunity to develop themselves and be a success, etc. In other words, women have two jobs: one both at home, full-time at work. So how can they cope? It's a vicious circle that people will not expect them to - men, women, coworkers. There is a lot of burden against women because of [illegible] problems.

If we look at the last example of a mother-in-law, there's some hope, as I said, all [illegible] help.

Mother-in-law

This mother-in-law's case was addressed to me by a young working professional woman. I was amazed at how caring they could be because one day she called and said that one of her housing tenants kept living in council houses, and he didn't want to move out. I asked why she wanted to evict outside and he said it was these tenants' problems again. She didn't do anything about it, neither did anyone else so it was difficult to evict him. So I said we could try and talk about something. In the end we thought that we could try to ask her mother-in-law, through one of the neighbours, to come to the council centre so that we can have someone and everyone together.

[illegible] she had been driven out, she supported her employees in the wider community who [illegible] the

problems, and she was quite vocal about her displeasure and dissatisfaction with her young daughter-in-law - her modern ways, etc. At the beginning they were all like that. But gradually they didn't seem to be that bad after all, they seem to be acceptable. So once this lady started to talk to the other women and started doing volunteer work, working with people who were much worse off than herself, that she began to realize that her problems at home were not that important anymore. She started to treat the daughter-in-law with much more tolerance. At the same time, the daughter-in-law felt much better, feeling that she was not being nagged and focused on all the time. So all suicidal tendencies stopped.

Why did I use this case as an illustration? It was mainly because if we really want to remove stresses and strain from our women, we have also got to work with older women who might be living with ideas of another age. But then those ideas have become sort of dominant values as to how we should interact with one another. So by getting them involved and inspiring their own development, they might be in a better position to help the younger women, instead of making life even more difficult for them.

Challenges and Opportunities

To conclude, I'll say that with modern times in a place like Hong Kong, we have tremendous opportunities for women. But then women are not in a position to tap those opportunities, because of this very narrow definition of their role pattern and their own imposition on themselves to behave like a good mother, the sort of womanhood that is expected of them. So they're not able to release their potentials - it's our loss, it's everybody's loss since it is half of mankind we're talking about. That means that in order to release all that, it's not only support from men, from society, from the definition of roles and etc., but also to work with women ourselves to provide this understanding, this interplay between the two.

At the grassroots level, already we can see that this community involvement has made our women more articulate. As we said earlier, women have not really been able to get themselves organized as women to fight for their own rights, unlike the Western women. But the situation of women in the grassroot community is such that whether we like it or not, some sort of movement will come about because we see a lot of these single parents in very poor situation, and a lot of older women living with older women, or by themselves, also in very bad situations. The two groups do not seem to get along well together so it's always women against women, so to speak.

People working there are quite aware of the situation, aware of the things we've been talking about, such as cases of sexual assault, even abuse of older women, rape, mental retardedness of older women, etc. They would have to begin helping one another and on the grassroot level people are already considering how to get them together and think of how to cope with the situation. That's why a lot of self-help kind of programs are beginning to germinate. I think a group like this would be able to provide ideas as to how they could learn from other countries and learn from other women who have been in better positions than themselves.

Women now have a lot of opportunities, but they also have a lot of challenges to face.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(Question) I was very interested in listening to your talk because it really helps to redress the balance, for after all we're not merely talking about the Lydia Dunns and Maria Tams of Hong Kong. The women of Kwun Tong are the women we need to think about. It was so interesting to hear about the very concrete ways that women from backgrounds who have had very little access to education can be helped to help themselves, so to speak. What I wanted to ask: do you have actually a deliberate policy of drawing women into grassroot organizations? Or does it happen spontaneously, or do these women approach you?

(Response) I think both. Particularly with help-work, women have always been considered as extremely important, because women have always been performing help-supportive role in the family. So that's why it's a deliberate effort in our work to draw in women into our self-help programs. But then also women's groups make conscious efforts in drawing them in, so as to give them opportunities to develop themselves; and via this development they will improve their family relationships, etc.

problems, and she was quite vocal about her displeasure and dissatisfaction with her young daughter-in-law – her modern ways, etc. At the beginning they were, as she said, but gradually they didn't seem so critical and after all, they seem to be acceptable. So once the lady started to talk to the other women and started doing volunteer work, working with people who were much worse off than herself, then she began to realize that her problems at home were not that important anymore. She started to relate to her daughter-in-law with much more tolerance. At the same time, the daughter-in-law felt much better, feeling that she was not being nagged and focused on all the time. So, all around tensions elapsed.

Why did I use this case as an illustration? It was mainly because if we really want to remove stresses and strain from our society, we have also got to work with older women, who would be living with ideas of another age. But then these ideas have become sort of dissonant values as to how we should interact with one another. So by getting them involved and targeting their own development, they might be in a better position to help the younger women, instead of making life even more difficult for them.

Challenges and Opportunities

To conclude, I'd say that with modern times in a place like Hong Kong, we have tremendous opportunities for women. But these women are facing a modern society, these opportunities, because of the very narrow definitions of their role patterns and their own expectations of themselves to behave like a good mother, the sort of womanhood that is expected of them. So they're not able to realise their potentials. It's not less, it's everybody's loss, since it's half of mankind we're talking about. That means, that in order to achieve all that, it's not only support from men, from society, from the government of those who want, but also to work with women ourselves to provide the understanding, the knowledge built on the core.

At the grassroots level, already we can see that this community development has made our women more articulate. As we said earlier, women have not really been able to get themselves organized like men to fight for their own rights, unlike the Western women. But the whole aim of women in the grassroots community is such that whether we like it or not, some sort of movement will come about because we see more of these single parents in very poor situations, and a lot of older women living with other women, or by themselves, who is very bad situations. The two groups we are about to start along well together to fight down women against women, so to speak.

People working there are quite aware of the concerns, some of the changes we've been talking about, such as cases of sexual assault, even abuse of older women, with medical records, losses of older women, etc. They would have to start to bring one another and see the grassroots level groups are already considering how to get them together and think of how to cope with the situation. That's why a lot of self-help groups of grassroots are beginning to germinate. I think a group like this would be able to provide the ideas of how they could learn from other countries, and learn from other women who have been in better situations than themselves.

Women now have a lot of opportunities, but they also have a lot of challenges to face.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(Question): I was very interested in listening to your talk because it really helps to redress the balance, for after all we're not merely talking about the really famous and flashy Towns of Hong Kong. The women of Kwun Tong are the women we need to talk about. It was an inspiration to hear about the very concrete ways that women from backgrounds who have had very little access to education can be helped to help themselves, so to speak. What I wanted to ask, do you have actually a deliberate policy of drawing women into grassroots organizations? Or does it happen spontaneously, or do these women approach you?

(Response): I think both. Traditionally, with fieldwork, women have always been considered as extremely important, because women have always been particularly important roles in the family. So that's why it's a deliberate effort to get women to work, to women with a family interest. But then the women's groups make conscious efforts in drawing them in so as to give them opportunities to develop themselves, and so this development they will improve their family relationships, etc.

Also with older women, because of this in-law problem, there's also a deliberate effort in bringing them together so that older women will be much more aware of what's going on in the community so that when they go back home and see their 'modern' daughter-in-law, at least they will be more aware that that's the trend, and the sort of acceptable thing to do, and is not because the daughter-in-law or daughter is outrageous in her ways. In this way, we try to make conscious effort in bringing the two groups together by socializing the older women and getting the younger women to sympathize with the situation of the older women, because younger women have a lot of opportunities envied by their in-laws. So we have to tell the younger women to sympathize with the older women and realize that one day they'll be old themselves. This is actually a conscious effort in building up this communication.

At the same time, there are many programs, for example, say, the District Administration Scheme, the Mutual Aid Committees, Area Committees and District Boards, which are more, in a way, spontaneous, depending on whether the woman in that particular block is active enough so that the people will elect her to be a representative of Mutual Aid Committees. But then the involvement there is not as extensive as we would like to see. At the same time they're beginning to make inroads, because women once they have the opportunities, they really work at it and emerge as being very reliable and dependable - in fact the whole family have always depended on this poor woman anyway, although people would like to think that she's very dependent on them. In fact she's probably the most depended on person. This sort of thing surfaces when they started to work these committees, and they start to seize important positions, when they chair this group and that group. Things the men would rather not do, then the committee would take over. That's why you can see that even more and more women are getting into chairing the Mutual Aid Committees and also getting elected into District Boards, etc. They're very much grassroots women, and some of them have hardly been to any school.

(Question) When you care for the women, aren't you sometimes attacked by the men telling you to stop muddling into their affairs and mind your own business?

(Response) Fortunately with me I have not been a sort of 'women's studies' kind of person - in fact I'm rather new to the field, very amateur. (Chair: are you a feminist?) I'm neither a feminist nor a women's studies expert, so nobody would identify me with such sort of thing. That's why they're not terrified of me, even when I asked them all those questions about the ideal wife, whether you take your wife for a holiday (because one told me they've not been to a single holiday for over ten years of marriage), etc. I was not being attacked, but some people would say (I was chairing a committee in the district), I don't like women to be over me. It's not attack, but they would tell you that chairing a district committee was a man's job, not a woman's job. ("I don't know why she got elected anyway.") They don't deliberately attack you, but at the same time they don't feel that it's right for you to do that sort of job. But since it's an open election, they have no choice.

(Question) Mona, you're very lucky, I'm always attacked being a co-chair of the Hong Kong Council of Women. I'd like to address myself to the term 'grassroot' in Hong Kong. When we say grassroot women, do we mean a set of behaviour, or a socio-economic class, or what? We talk about socio-economic, or just economics, in Kwun Tong, where Mona does a lot of community projects. When I talk to bankers in Kwun Tong, a lot of people told me the women there actually do a lot of going into the stock-exchanges, going into the brokers' office, in fact doing a lot of currency exchange activities - in fact make a good deal of private pocket money from there. So I have doubts about the economic side. In fact they have the time, by the very fact of their subordinate position, as they have to stay in the house, they have the time to go to the banks and sit in front of the computer screen. I don't know whether most of the expats have realized this fact, but this is very peculiar to Hong Kong. I don't see suburbian housewives elsewhere having the chance to do that. Personally, I'm very interested to look into that with the grassroot women. That is one side of it.

From the feedback from the Women's Centre, (I don't know whether Katherine Tang would be able to tell me) just from speaking with the Executive Secretary there, we have our hotline service at the Women's Centre, most of the problems of the grassroots women concern the legal side, like housing problem, something that's most immediate to them, and health problem and family problem (regarding the family having to live together with the in-laws). Maybe in Hong Kong the economic problem is a question - they are the ones at the very grassroot, I'm very sure that it is, but with the public housing scheme and all that, in fact a lot of women have more disposable income than some of the lower-middle class people because of the rental in housing and all that. I think a lot of their problems have to do with the information network - not being able to get information filtered down from the top, and not being able to get their voices up to the top. This also happens

to feminist organizations at the grassroot level. It's very difficult to get information upwards to the elitist power.

The second thing is there is no women's policy as such in Hong Kong - we're still very much linking up with juveniles. As for health centres, Mona, there is no women's health centre as there is overseas, is there?

(Response) I think there are women's health programs, yes, but we have not set aside a women's centre, because we do not believe in separating people. We actually believe in a family health centre, a community health centre, where women and men, young and old, can all come together. What we'd like to do is to build up communications among all these different people. We don't want to compartmentalize children and youth centres, centres for the elderly, this centre and that centre, because we found that, when we work in the grassroots, if you do that, you only bring about prejudices about one another - difficulties of communication - rather than improving communication. With women, we have distinct programs, for example, like teaching them about breast examination, and examination of their own problems, etc., that sort of program. But we found it extremely important to look into the whole network of personal and social interaction, which might bring about a lot of psychosomatic problems in women - insomnia, stomach ulcer, etc. - all those are related to their interaction with the whole family, and also to their own self-perception: whether they feel themselves to be achieving as a human being or not.

When talking about grassroot, I'm not talking about whether they've actually money or not - money might concern a few people - but for others it is the actual situation whereby they have difficulty in releasing certain potentials or their own self-development. It is true that you would find some women who might go into the stockmarket and you might have an old woman who would suddenly present us with a certificate of stocks and shares, maybe about three to four thousand dollars. Another woman, she said, encouraged her to buy it from this man, because this stock is going to go up. When you look at it, there is no receipt as to where she got the certificate, it's not under her name, nothing at all. So you have that sort of grassroot person simply cheated by playing in the stock market, and they might even go there faithfully. Some might make money because someone might be in a good position to guide them, others by chance, but a lot of bad things are going on. In other words, as you said, some might be very wealthy, but at the same time they do not have the knowledge about the availability of services and information, and they might be cheated, blackmailed, etc.

I agree that housing is a major problem because in the course of my work meeting with people regularly, over 80% has been housing problems, which have been causing family disputes, and all sorts of things. My focus was more on how we can release the potentials of this group of women, who have not had the benefits like every one of us, not even regular high school education. So how can we get more opportunities for them, that's my concern. Also how to tackle the group of single mothers, and women abandoned after cohabitation and branded as immoral, and how to cope with this group of women who are getting old...

(Question) With the family approach in providing services for women I have reservations, and a kind of concern, also. Looking at Hong Kong in general, all services provided for women are within the family approach. So all women's services are provided for within the family services centre, and their goal is to preserve the family as a unit. The package which comes out is like how to prepare women to be good housewives, mothers, etc. I was wondering if this family approach to providing services for women maybe created a greater conflict. On the one hand we stress that women need to develop themselves and on the other hand we provide services within a family framework, that you exist inside a family unit, otherwise you're nobody. It has been my experience that even the government takes this point of view, because when our Women's Centre asked for funding, they said we never fund any services provided for women alone. We have to look for some agencies providing services to families as a unit. I do have concern with regard to the family approach. Maybe we could discuss it later on.

(Response) Maybe I'll respond to it right away before we lose this point. I think this has been a very debatable thing. In Hong Kong, there's been far too much compartmentalization. I think by encouraging a community approach, and a family approach, it doesn't mean that you downgrade the role of women. Because by being able to interact and share, in fact you gain. From my experience with our work, I'd say women gain because there's no way the woman could tell her husband or mother-in-law that that's the way I'd like to bring up my child, even including feeding. Giving apples and vegetables, they might think it's too cold; or even going to the family health centre, mother-in-law doesn't want the child to go there because the child would catch a cold if you take off the

to feminist organizations at the grassroot level. It is very difficult to get information upwards to the older person.

The second thing is there is no women's policy as such in Hong Kong - we're still very much lagging up with [illegible] - as for health centres, Mona, there is no women's health centre as there is overseas, is there?

(Response) I think there are women's health programs, but we have not set aside a women's centre, because we do not believe in separating people. We actually believe in a family health centre, a community health centre, where women and men, young and old can all come together. What we'd like to do is to build up communications among all these different groups. We [illegible] children and youth [illegible] centres, services for the elderly, [illegible] because we found that, when we work in the centre, if you do that, you only bring about [illegible] one another - difficulties of communication - rather than improving communication. With women, we have [illegible] programs, for example, like teaching them about breast examination, and examination of their own problems, [illegible] that sort of program. But we found it extremely important to look into the whole network of personal and social relationships which might bring about a lot of psychosomatic problems in women - insomnia, stomach ulcers, etc. - and those are related to their interaction with the whole family, and also to their own self-perception, whether they feel themselves to be achieving as a human being or not.

When talking about grassroots, I'm not talking [illegible] poverty or [illegible] money might concern a few people - but for women it is the actual [illegible] difficulty in reflecting certain potentials or their own self-development. It is true [illegible] women who might go into the stockmarket and you might have an old woman who would suddenly [illegible] stocks and shares, maybe [illegible] from this man, because this stock is going to go up. When you look at it, there is no [illegible] the certificate, it's not under her name, [illegible]. So you have that sort of grassroot person [illegible] by playing in the stock market, and they might [illegible]. Some might [illegible] someone might be in a good position to [illegible] by chance, [illegible] other words, as you said, some [illegible] know [illegible] about the availability of services and information, and they [illegible] exploited, [illegible].

I agree that housing is a major problem [illegible] over 60's has been housing problems [illegible] family [illegible] was more on how we can release the [illegible] one of us, not even [illegible] common. Also how to tackle the group of [illegible] women [illegible] as immoral, and how to cope with this group of women who are getting old.

(Question) With the family approach to providing services for women [illegible] also. Looking at Hong Kong in general, all services [illegible] women's services are provided for within the family [illegible] a unit. The [illegible] which comes out [illegible] I was wondering if the family approach to providing services for women [illegible] one hand we stress that women need [illegible] a family framework, that you take [illegible] even the government takes this point of view, because [illegible] Women's Centre [illegible] we never find any services provided [illegible] to families as a unit. [illegible]

(Response) Maybe I'll respond to it right away [illegible] thing. In Hong Kong, there's been [illegible] approach, and a family approach [illegible] to mistrust and abuse, [illegible] we say the women could not be [illegible] including feeding. [illegible] centre, mother-in-law doesn't want [illegible]

child's clothes as they weigh the baby. The only thing that you could do is by bringing the mother-in-law in and giving her face, getting her to believe that this is the right thing to do, and then you can get your way as well. When you ask a girl to go to study - she has ability, she's a wife, she's a daughter-in-law - you've to influence the mother-in-law, otherwise the mother-in-law would not help to look after the children so the woman would not go to her studies. The situation in the actual community is that you depend a lot on parents or mothers-in-law before a woman would even conceive of going to work. Because as soon as the mother-in-law or parents start to say that "well, I'm not in a position to help", and Filipina maids are not always an affordable alternative, it's always the mother-in-law or parents. Once they say no, you have to stop your studies, even stop work. So it's important to bring them together and not so much to say that "well, let's forget women's issues, or women's health", it's not that.

(Chair) I think it's not a black or white kind of picture. The problem is a shade of grey. Actually the issue relates to the presentation of our next speaker, who will -

(Question) I want to pick up on the last issue. You're saying that the women's resources seem to be very much within the family, and (my backgroud is social work in the West) we look very much at women, sometimes single women, and single men, making support groups together, so that if you're sick, your neighbour would take care of your child while you have work, and you will do something equivalent for your neighbour: when she wants to go away on Sunday, you take that child in with yours. Is it very much different here whereas more are sent to just within the family for support. Or how much does that happen in the public housing estates, how much is that encouraged?

(Response) I think that it is always encouraged. This sort of support group, in fact is developing among non-family members. But from our observation, a lot of support for those who have families are still from the family. But for those who may not get support from the family of course they're turning towards nurseries, and also other women with whom they can leave their children, etc. etc. And also this kind of support group you see in the U.K. or U.S.A. I think that's not as developed as we would like it to see, but certainly that's the direction that people would like it to go. But the family is still very strong. We cannot just shut it out and say that women will look for other channels, middle-class women are now in fact -

(Chair) Let's go on to our next speaker and then we can have a general discussion on certain issues. Our next presentation will be by Dr. Ho Suk-Ching - she is a senior lecturer in the Department of Marketing at Chinese University, and she's obtained her degrees in Hong Kong as well as in the United States. What I find quite interesting is she's done work on sex role portrayals in advertisements (the first image I have is the Virginia Slim's advertisement), and she's also working on consumer behaviour in supermarkets and convenience stores, which we know are basically frequented by women. So Dr. Ho will actually speak on this whole issue of gender role stereotyping and career opportunities for women in Hong Kong, which probably addresses the problems of many women here who are in careers.

child's practice is then weigh the baby. The only thing that you could do is by bringing the mother-in-law in and giving her face, getting her a-la-faire that this is the right thing to do, and then you can get some way as well. When you ask a girl to go formally - you lose reality; she's a wife, she's a daughter-in-law - you've to influence the mother-in-law, otherwise the mother-in-law would not help to look after the children, as the woman would not get it working. The situation in the actual community is that you depend a lot on parents or mother-in-law before a woman would even consider of going to work. However as soon as the mother-in-law or parents start to say that "well, I'm not in a position to help", and relatives would not always be an affordable alternative, it's usually the mother-in-law or parents. Once they say no, you have to stop your studies, even stop work. So it's important to bring these resources and not so much to say that "Well, it's a larger women's issue, or women's issues", it's not that.

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(Question) I want to seek up on the last issue. You're saying that the woman's resources seem to be very much within the family, and (say) the Western's model seems to me (that) we look very much at women, sometimes single women, and single men, making support group together, so that if you're sick, your neighbour would take care of your daily while you have work, and you will do something equivalent for your neighbour when she wants to go away on holiday, you take that child to your home. It is very much different here whereas more are, seem to just within the family for support. Or how much does that happen in the public housing estates, how much is that encouraged?

(Response) I think that it's always encouraged. This sort of support group, in fact is developing among new housing estates. But from our observation, a lot of support for those who have families are still from the family. But for those who can not get support from the family of course they're turning towards nurseries, and also other women with whom they can leave their children, etc. etc.. And also this kind of support group you see in the U.K. and U.S.A. I think there's not so developed as we would like it to see, but certainly that's the direction that people would like it to go. But the family is still very strong. We cannot just shut it out and say that women will have to rather do more outside the family without in fact -

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GENDER ROLE STEREOTYPING AND CAREER OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN IN HONG KONG

Dr. Ho Suk-Ching
Department of Marketing, Chinese University of Hong Kong

Thank you, Linda, for your introduction. Also thanks to Ms. Lo for her previous speech which has touched on some points that I'd like to make. So your speech has helped me to cut short mine. We can have more time for general discussion.

Throughout this morning and this afternoon I think we have touched on some of the issues faced by women in traditional Chinese society and in contemporary society in Hong Kong. By occupation I am a teacher in the field of business administration, so naturally most of my research interest in the area of women is centred upon some of the issues facing women as members of the workforce. I think this is a very critical issue. I believe that prestige and status can be attained through occupational achievements. That's why I would like to talk about career opportunities for women in Hong Kong. I think this is one of the most effective means in which women can help to raise their positions in society. What I hope to share with you in the following 15-20 minutes is the findings of a research project which I did some five years ago. Based on those research findings then maybe we can try to look into the future - what the career opportunities for women are in Hong Kong.

The study was conducted in 1983, which was quite some years ago, but, I believe the results could still very well serve as the background for our discussion. I think the research results that I obtained in 1983 are still very reflective of the situation of today. Of course, this is open for discussion. Without going into details, let me just say that the objective of the study was to probe into the hiring preferences of the business organizations in Hong Kong. The aim is to determine whether women encounter any differential treatment at the entry level. The method that I used was to content analyze the recruitment advertisements of the business firms which placed their advertisements in the newspaper. The time of the study spans over the whole year of 1983, and close to 10,000 recruitment ads were analyzed. So what were the results? Again, I'm not going to talk about percentages. (Maybe if you like to have a general picture of that we could have a discussion after the speech, I have the article with me.)

Let me briefly talk about the results. In terms of industrial background in those advertisements, women applicants were preferred over their male counterparts in the wholesale-retail business, the import-export trade, and the hotel-restaurant industry, while male workers were preferred in the sectors of manufacturing, public utilities, financial institutions, transport, communications, and storage. In terms of positions, there was a dense concentration of women preferred in the clerical rank as secretaries, stenographers and clerks, whereas a higher percentage of men was preferred in managerial, supervisory, technical, selling, and such like, roles.

If the phenomenon is so pervasive not only in Hong Kong but in other cultures as well, then a natural question to ask is what are the explanatory reasons. Of course there are many many reasons which have combined to give rise to such a phenomenon; and of course it is impossible to talk about all of them, and then try to sort out one or two as the determining factors. But research studies today have indicated that one of the most important intervening variables which lead to this occupational segregation phenomenon is the operation of sex roles, or gender roles.

In fact if we take a deeper look into the pattern of occupational segregation as reviewed in my research data, we can discover that there is indeed a very close resemblance between the pattern of occupational segregation and sex role stereotyping in society at large. For instance, women tended to be preferred in the commercial and trading sector, or in people-related industries - hotel, restaurant, etc. Why was it so? My belief is that this tendency reflects a very long-held belief of the role of women as better than their male counterparts in dealing with people, and more suitable to work in an indoor, office-type, less dynamic environment. On the other hand, manufacturing, transport, communications, and storage carry the connotation of being masculine, and having to work in very tough environments. Such connotation matches the perceived role of men, and consequently men were preferred in these industries - naturally. And again because of sex-role associations, clerical work has become a female occupation, simply because it is viewed primarily as involving tasks judged to be less dynamic and needing patient attention to details, both of which are believed to be qualities associated

GENDER ROLE STEREOTYPING AND CAREER OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN IN HONG KONG

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The study was conducted in 1982, which was quite some years ago, but I believe the results could still very well serve as the background for our discussion. I think the research results that I obtained in 1982 are still very relevant in the situation of today. Of course, this is open for discussion. Without going into details, let me mention that the objective of the study was to probe into the hiring preferences of the business organizations in Hong Kong, [illegible] any differential treatment at the entry level. The method that I used was to conduct a content analysis of the recruitment advertisements of the business firms which placed their advertisements in the newspapers. The time of the study spans over the whole year of 1982, and close to 10,000 recruitment adverts were analyzed. So what were the results? [illegible] percentages. (Maybe I would like to have a general picture of [illegible] discussion after the speech. I have the article with me.)

Let me briefly talk about the results. In terms of [illegible] background [illegible], female applicants were preferred over their male counterparts in [illegible] the wholesale/retail trade, and the hotel/restaurant industries, while male workers were preferred in the sectors of manufacturing, public utilities, financial institutions [illegible]. In terms of positions, there was a higher percentage of women preferred in the clerical rank [illegible], whereas a higher percentage of men was preferred in managerial, supervisory, technical, [illegible] ranks.

If the phenomenon [illegible] not only in Hong Kong but in other countries as well, then a natural question to ask is why [illegible]. Of course, there are many reasons which have contributed to [illegible] and it is impossible to talk about all of them, and [illegible] one of the most important factors [illegible] is the [illegible] gender role stereotyping [illegible] of [illegible].

In fact [illegible] the pattern of occupational segregation [illegible] [illegible]

with women. Which I believe is true. Occupations believed to require qualities of coolness, detachment, analytic objectivity or object orientation, such as management or technical jobs, are considered as male occupations. Even if women were preferred in managerial positions as reviewed in those recruitment advertisements, they were in people-related areas, such as personnel and public relations, which again is a reflection of the sex role in the society at large.

Obviously the preference of one sex over the other to fill a particular position in a particular industry can be partially explained in terms of perceived sex roles. Each society establishes role descriptions of its members, and within any given society there are expectations that members will develop according to the socially defined norm. So in the area of employment, this means that sex role prescribes not only appropriate sex roles within the professions, but also which occupations should be selected. Our culture demands that one must do feminine work to be considered an ideal woman, and not to do it is to be a masculine man, a perfect masculine man.

So in line with the above discussion, I will say that any significant which will substantially order the career opportunity of women cannot occur as long as basic values and attitudes concerning the sexual division of labour in society remain unchanged. It also goes without saying that there is no easy solution to the problem. I think this is why we are here today. A concerted effort will be required on the part of many parties in society. But before I go on with the elaboration of some of the possible means, (to affect this change) let me just qualify some of the points that I have made so far.

While I speak of sex stereotyping in occupations, personally I have no value judgement as to which occupation is better than the other. To me a secretary is just as valuable as a general manager. What concerns me is if the choice is not a free choice, rather it is dictated by outside situations such as the recruitment preferences of the business firms, then something must be wrong. Also if members of the society, men or women, have no ill feeling about the situation, then it is perfectly O.K. for the situation to exist. But if we think this shouldn't be the case, then I believe something must be done. Because I believe that this should not be the case, so I think something must be done - not because that women cannot be clerks, women cannot be secretaries, we must be managers, or be what is popularly termed 'Strong Women'. What I'm saying is if we believe that this is not right, then surely we must think of something, and this is what I'd like to talk about in the coming five minutes. I think it's very important that we women cannot just sit in a house and wait for something to happen, particularly in the career field. We have to do something ourselves. One of the best way to do it is by commitment. By this I mean that if women can become more determined in their career pursuits and try to have a longer working life time, something can happen.

Sex stereotyping in the labour market tends to be a perpetuating process, operating according to the dynamic of the so-called self-fulfilling prophecy, meaning that women are regarded as suitable for certain jobs, and treated accordingly. This treatment results in fewer women permitted to enter certain job categories, which in turn gives further confirmation to the traditional views, and so the vicious circle goes on. But if we become more committed workers, rather than to be the first one to retreat from our job, coming and going, coming and going, I think we might be treated differently, and then this self-fulfilling prophecy will work in the opposite direction, meaning that women are committed members. They can be trusted with responsible positions. And so if one woman is doing that, joined by another woman, and then another woman, this will become an accepted pattern rather than a deviant behaviour. That so-called vicious circle can work to our advantage. The problem of course is how. How can we become committed workers? Do we have mothers-in-law to look after our children? Do we have a supportive husband who can get a day off when our children are sick, or are we going to be the first one to go home? I think this is one of the most important issues, and one of the most effective means to change some of the stereotyping that society does to our women.

Of course there are also other effective means, but since I'm concentrating on the area of sex roles, I'll just leave the discussion to the audience. I think with this I end my presentation. Thank you.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(Chair) I'd like to start the first question. I think what has been found in studies from the West (in fact one of the things we may discuss in the end is how patterns in Hong Kong are similar or different or maybe 5 or 10

with women. Which I believe is true. Occupations believed to require qualities of toughness, detachment, analytic objectivity or object orientation, such as management or technical jobs, are considered as male occupations. Even if women were preferred in managerial positions as reviewed in those recruitment advertisements, they were in people-related areas, such as personnel and public relations, which again is a reflection of the sex role in the society at large.

Obviously the preference of one sex over the other to fill a particular position in a particular industry can be partially explained in terms of perceived sex roles. Each society institutionalizes role stereotypes of its members, and within any given society there are expectations that members will behave according to the socially defined norm. So in the area of employment, the norms that sex role prescribes not only appropriate sex roles within the profession, but also which occupations should be followed. Our culture demands that one must do feminine work to be considered an ideal woman, and men must do a job of a masculine nature, a perfect masculine man.

So in line with the above discussion, I will say that any significant change which will substantially widen the career opportunities of women cannot occur as long as basic values and attitudes concerning the sexual division of labour in society remain unchanged. It also goes without saying that there is no easy solution to the problems. I think this is why we are here today. A concerted effort will be required on the part of many sectors in society. But before I go on with the elaboration of some of the possible actions (to affect this change) let me just quickly state some of the points that I have made so far.

While I speak of sex stereotyping in occupations, personally I have no value judgement as to which occupation is better than the other. To me a [illegible] is not as valuable as a general manager. What concerns me is if the choice is not a free choice, rather it is dictated by [illegible] such as the recruitment preference of the business firms, then something must be wrong. And if members of the society, men or women, have no ill feeling about the situation, then it's a different [illegible] for the situation to exist. But if we think this shouldn't be the case, then I believe something must be done. Since I believe that this should not be the case, so I think something must be done [illegible] not because that women cannot [illegible], women cannot be [illegible], or be, what is popularly termed 'Strong Women'. What I'm saying is if we believe that this is not right, [illegible] think of something, and this is what I'd like to talk about in the coming five minutes. I think it's very important that we women cannot just sit at the home and wait for something to happen, particularly in the career field. We have to do something ourselves. One of the best way to do it is by [illegible]. Besides, I think that if women can become more [illegible] of their career patterns and try to have a longer working life then something can happen.

Sex stereotyping in the labour market tends to be a self-perpetuating process, operating according to the dynamics of the so-called self-fulfilling prophecy. It seems that women are regarded as suitable for certain jobs, and treated accordingly. The recruitment results in fewer women promoted to enter certain job categories, which in turn gives further confirmation to the traditional beliefs and so the vicious circle goes on. But if we become more committed to our career, [illegible] the fact [illegible] from our job, [illegible] and going, I think we might be treated differently, and then the self-fulfilling prophecy will work in the opposite direction, meaning that women are [illegible]. They can be trusted with responsible positions. And so if one woman is doing that, joined by another woman, and then another woman, this will become an accepted pattern rather than a deviant behaviour. [illegible] in our attitudes. The problem of course is [illegible]. How can we [illegible] to look after our children? Do we have a supportive [illegible] or are we going to be the first one to go home? I think this is one of the most important issues, and one of the most effective means to change some of the stereotyping of [illegible] roles in our society.

Of course, there are also other effective means, but since I'm concentrating on the area of sex roles, I'll just leave the discussion to our speakers. I think with this I end my presentation. Thank you.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(Chair) I'd like to start the first question. I think what has been found in studies from the West [illegible] one of the things [illegible] factor in the [illegible] Many things are similar or different in sample 5 or 36

years behind the movement that occurred in the West) is that we find a lot of women who have the technical and university diplomas and everything, go into jobs, they work for 5 to 10 years and then they find that they are discriminated at the highest levels of promotion. This is a big problem. So on the one hand you say women can't get committed, in fact they are 100% committed (usually women have to work 150% more than men in the same job to prove their worth) and they finally find that they're discriminated at the top level, they're not put into the fast track but the slow track. On the other hand, my own experience is that women are in a way lucky, we can choose - we can choose to be housewives, have children and live a beautiful, Virgin Mary mother image at home, and some of us who may enjoy intellectual work or like to do outside work can choose and feel that their talents are good, they can do outside work. So we get the choice, whereas men do not. So this makes for a lot of dilemma I find in professional work. A lot of the men, if they were women, they'd be at home having babies and taking care of housework. This is a big problem when you get into careers, because men are in the upper echelons and we have to admit that in most bureaucratic structures and institutions here - whether it's government, university, or private firm - you have basically a male network, and males go out in the evenings to socialize, whereas a single woman or a married woman does not fit in, and therefore really is barred from climbing up. She may be allowed to work in the field, but only in an inferior position. So these are some of the issues that career women face, in Hong Kong as well as elsewhere.

(Response) Well, my research that I did a few years ago was concerned with women's occupational choice at the entry level. That is, whether they can have a chance to enter first. And of course what happened later on, we'll have to see. But if we face discrimination at the entry level, we cannot hope to be in a higher position later on. If we can never enter into the managerial or supervisory positions, it will be pretty difficult for us to talk about becoming a general manager later on. Of course from my own experience talking to graduates from the Chinese Unviersity of Hong Kong, they also have the feeling that it is very difficult to compete with their male counterparts when it comes to promotion; and of course we can talk more about the explanatory variables. But if we can break the barrier at the entry level, maybe we have a not so bright but at least some future. Concerning the second point Linda has just made, whether it's lucky that we have a choice to work or not I'm not so sure. I think it's not so lucky that we have a choice, because if we don't have a choice, we won't be the first one to quit. Actually I have a feeling, which is confirmed by my observation, that many of the women who tend to quit more easily are those who have better education and who are better off, because economically speaking they are not that desperate to hold on to their jobs. They have husbands who can even earn more money, so they can stay at home comfortably. So whether it's lucky or not I really don't know.

(Question) We're all downplaying a bit of the role of a woman as mother, I think that the social function that she's fulfilling in raising children to be productive members of society should not be downgraded against a job in the workforce. Women's consciousness at that level should be raised.

(Response) Right. Actually I agree that everyone has a free choice. If being a good mother is more important than to be successful in career, it's O.K. because after all our future society depends on our future generation. In fact when I talk to my former classmates or some of my students who decided to quit their job to look after the children, I completely agree with them.

(Question) But it's not so much a subjective decision that's the point I'm trying to make, it's the point that we ourselves should not downgrade that role. The idea that a woman should stick to the job to prove that she's going to be there at the cost of her family I think creates a tremendous contradiction in the whole role of women in society. And this is a dilemma.

(Response) Right, I agree. Actually in my whole research I did not say this is not an important role. What I'm trying to say is that sex role portrayal and career opportunity has some relationship. If we're going to tackle the problem, we have to do something, not at the expense of downgrading our role as mother. In fact I'm in a very great dilemma because I'm a mother as well.

(Question) The comment that I would like to make is that I think that as feminists who are attempting to analyze women's position in society, how we find ourselves faced with the kind of difficulties we've been here describing is that there is a grave danger in not looking at the institutions in society which support the institution of family rearing in the kind of structure that has been invented. Because women would not be torn apart performing their family obligations if in fact we look at the way institutions are structured. A very simple example, and I'm

indebted for this to a Canadian sociologist, Dr. Dorothy Smith, who says, "Let's look at the hours we keep schools open." That's a very simple one and a very basic one. So I think it's really important to look at those institutions and the role of women feeling forced to choose that either/or situation.

(Response) I think there's no simple solutions to this.

(Question) Well, I was going to ask a question just related to the institutionalization of discrimination. When you went to look at people at entry level positions, one of the things that hit me right in the eye (of course coming from a Canadian context) was that presently in North America it is outlawed to advertise any entry-level positions, or indeed any positions, having a sex designation to it. So one of the things I was going to raise is what do you think would happen if there began to be a really serious effort carried forward to ban that kind of advertising in this particular locale? What do you think the effect might be?

(Response) Opportunity careers for both sexes will be greater. Not only for women, but for men. Members of the society will feel freer to apply for the advertised job. If they think they would like to apply for the job, they would take the step to apply, whether successful or not. Of course, it also depends on the applicant, whether they themselves consider that kind of job feminine or masculine; whether they would like to do it. I think it is very person-specific.

(Question) Maybe I add to that. I think the obstacles to career opportunities are not even at the entry level, it goes far back. Looking at the way we've been socialized when we were little girls, we've been exposed to textbooks which shows teachers as female and doctors as male. And then the way we were brought up. First, consider career choice: when we go to secondary school counsellors, they say you might be thinking of getting a secretarial job. Even if you ban sexual discrimination in the advertisements, maybe, truly speaking, there aren't too many females equipped for that kind of job, because we have been socialized or stereotyped that females should be working in certain kinds of jobs. So there are girls going to commercial schools learning how to type, how to take shorthand, rather than going to technical schools or medical schools - not that they don't want to. They aren't just brought up that way. I would think that the obstacle dates further back than the entry level; even if it is open to everybody who applies, frankly speaking some of the jobs we weren't qualified for, just simply because we are not prepared when we grow up, we do not even think about it when we first consider career choice. There are still a lot of obstacles for the females to overcome before they can go to that level.

(Question) I'd like to add two things: I think we need to think about affordable childcare so that women are freed up, so that they can stay at work, and are not the first ones to go home; and I also think we have to think about consciousness raising for men, and moving towards more equal roles within the family. I haven't heard any talk about any of that.

(Response) Well, in fact, in my original article I talked about that, but I think this issue will be raised anyway. Sure, when we talk about solutions, we cannot talk about women exclusively, we have to talk about men, about society, about institutions, about everything. In fact, Catherine has just mentioned the socialization process, and I think Dr. Bernard Luk is doing research on that at the Chinese University, content-analyzing the textbooks to see what sex roles are portrayed - such as in the evening, it's always the father who comes back from work, it's always the mother who's preparing dinner in the kitchen. This is the kind of thing children come across in the textbooks. Sure, they will become socialized. There are a lot of issues and we can't just talk about women. That's why at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, we have a 'gender role' research group, instead of 'women'.

(Question) I just like to make one comment about women and also on the kind of work they're engaged in. With the grassroots women, I think they have more options, in a way, because they're more entrepreneurial, in the sense that they don't have to worry about formal education, whether they've been socialized into this or that. It is of necessity that they become hawkers, and they might make good through hawking. We have examples of this in Kwun Tong: we have a Princess of the Market. Now she's become a big philanthropist because of her economic success. She was brought up right in the market and became very successful just selling meat and vegetables, and fish and all sorts of things. So that's why in order to break the vicious cycle, perhaps women could become more entrepreneurial. They can be their own director, their own manager, and so on. That might be one way of not having to get into the situation when they were hired. Then when they become directors

indebted for this to a Canadian sociologist, Dr. Dorothy Smith, who says, "Let's look at the books; we keep schools open." That's a very simple one and a very good one. So I think it's really important to look at these institutions and the role of women feeling forced to choose that occupation situation.

(Response) I think there's no simple solution to this.

(Question) Well, I was going to ask a question in regard to the [illegible] implications of discrimination. When you want to look at people in [illegible] [illegible], one of the [illegible] that [illegible] right in the eye (of course coming from a Canadian context) was that [illegible] in [illegible] it is [illegible] to advertise any entry-level positions, of [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] sort. So one of the things I was going to raise is what do you think would happen if there [illegible] to [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] to ban that kind of advertising in this particular [illegible]? What do you think the effect might be?

(Response) [illegible] careers for [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]. [illegible] [illegible] the [illegible] that [illegible] them. Members of the [illegible] will [illegible] to apply for the [illegible] job. If they think they would [illegible] to apply for the job, they would [illegible] [illegible] to [illegible] whether [illegible] [illegible]. Of course, it [illegible] [illegible] to the applicant, whether they themselves consider that kind of job [illegible] or [illegible], whether they would like to do it. I think it's very [illegible] specific.

(Question) Maybe I add to that. I think the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] are not seen at the entry levels if you see facts. Looking at the way [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible], we've been exposed to [illegible] which [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] and [illegible] [illegible]. And then [illegible] we [illegible] brought up. First, [illegible] career [illegible], which we [illegible] to [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible], they say they might be [illegible] of getting [illegible] [illegible]. So if you have [illegible] [illegible] in the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible], [illegible] [illegible], there aren't [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] for [illegible] kind of [illegible] [illegible], [illegible] [illegible] or [illegible] [illegible] that [illegible] should be [illegible] to [illegible] [illegible] of jobs. [illegible] [illegible] going to [illegible] [illegible] schools [illegible] how to [illegible] how to [illegible] [illegible] their [illegible] to [illegible] schools or [illegible] schools, and that they don't want to. They aren't [illegible] [illegible], [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] that [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] better [illegible] than the entry level, even if it is open to [illegible] [illegible] applying [illegible] [illegible] of the [illegible] [illegible] qualified [illegible] [illegible] because [illegible] are not [illegible] when we grow up, we do not even think about it when we first consider [illegible] [illegible]. There are [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] for the [illegible] to [illegible] before they can go to that [illegible].

(Question) I'd like to add two things. I think we have to [illegible] about [illegible] [illegible] as [illegible] women are [illegible] up, so that they [illegible] [illegible] of work, and [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] to go home, and I also think we have to think about [illegible] and [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] within the family. I haven't heard any talk about any of [illegible].

(Response) Well, [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] that, and I think [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]. Sure, when we talk about [illegible], we [illegible] talk about [illegible] [illegible], [illegible] [illegible] to talk about [illegible], [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]. [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] process, and I think [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] analyzing the [illegible] to see what [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] work. [illegible] the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] in [illegible] [illegible]. This is the kind of thing [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] in the [illegible]. [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]. There's [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] about women. That's why at the Chinese University of Hong Kong we [illegible] our research group instead of "women".

(Question) I just [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] the kind of work they're exposed to. With the [illegible] women I [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] in the [illegible] that [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] into this or that. [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]. We have examples of this in Hong Kong [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] because of her [illegible] [illegible]. [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] and [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]. [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]. That [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]. Then when they [illegible] [illegible] [illegible].

themselves they can hire the women and give the women responsibility. I think women supporting women is very important.

(Question) Just a brief addition to sources of ideological, stereotypical assumptions about future expectations of either gender. The Taiwanese women's magazine Funu Xinzhi (Awakening) recently conducted a study looking at the kind of teaching materials prepared for school kids. This is a wonderful illustration of what school kids are internalizing. What you see beautifully illustrates the point we just made - boys doing mountaineering, doing experiments in labs, playing football, engaging in outdoor activities and challenge, facing obstacles: they prove themselves to be ready to face adulthood. On the other side, you see men at work - sitting around the table discussing the issues affecting society, you see a man holding a public speech, you have a young man reading, pondering profound issues. In the middle you have two young boys here preparing themselves for the kind of intellectual achievements that will change society. Then at the bottom you have her at the sewing machine on the left hand side, and a young woman worshipping in front of the ancestral tablets, and in the middle you can see two glowingly happy, fulfilled, women (mother and daughter), scrubbing away at pots and pans, all so that the men can go out and make culture. This is 1988, Taiwan.

(Chair) As a TV-watcher, just wondering whether some of the images are actually changing or been imported from the West, because if I were a true feminist, I should be smoking Virginia Slims, and wearing Longine watches. ... It's interesting how some of the advertising now which catches the eyes of women as consumers are now aimed at women who are more independent.

(Question) I'd like to go back to the role of the woman as mother. We always assume, or rather all societies seem to assume, that only women can be good parents. I think we have to help both ourselves and help men to understand that men can be very good parents. I have a friend back home in England, (I'm a senior manager in social services) and he applied to me for a job. At the last minute he withdrew, because his wife was having a baby, and she's just finished a degree in psychology, and had been offered a job as a psychologist, and she wanted to carry on. So he withdrew from seeking promotions so that he could care for the baby. He had a job on all-night duty service so he could work it very well. He was laughed at by a lot of his male colleagues, and when he took the baby to the clinic for the check-ups, he was almost ignored by the health assistants there, and he felt terrible. He was very good, and is a very good father. We have a lot to learn ourselves about this, and we've got to help men bring out what we term the more 'feminine' side of themselves. I think men miss out on child rearing. They miss those lovely years say I as a woman who has never had any children, but I have missed out. I've done it by being a childcare officer. I feel sorry for men who do miss out on children who are learning, when they're very small, and say their first words. We have a lot of learning ourselves to do.

(Question) I think that this is one place where women really do have some power. Who brings up the little boys? We do. What are we doing when we prepare these awful men who're going to treat their wives abominably, because we let them walk over us. This starts from day one in the cradle, frankly, and you and I are the ones who're mostly there, right? We can't blame the father necessarily. It was mentioned in one of the talks, about parents-in-law having something to do with parenting, but frankly we do have parents in this area, right? So this starts really early, when you're reading stories to your children, it starts with what you expect your boys to play with, is he going to get a present from you, is he going to get a present of ... Boys do have teddys in the West, why not teach your young boy how to care for his teddy, you know, talk about putting nappies on the teddy - these are the basic things that husbands are shying away from. My boy already knows how to put a nappy on his teddy. He's known it for ages! He's training now! I didn't do it on purpose, but when I think of it now, he's already trained how to put a nappy on. These are very basic things, and these are what we can do. I mean, boys are brought up by us. A lot is just handed over to the wife, and some give the wife a hard time. If we let them grow up the typical stereotype male, I agree it's missing out on a lot of these things. My boy likes playing with his teddy and putting nappies on, it's great fun. So it's up to us. Don't just expect the little boy to run around and play outside while the little girl is by the sink. We've no one to blame if half of the population wants to keep women at home, because we're setting half of it up.

(Question) I think if men did do this house-husbanding, their role would have a much higher status than it does when women do it. Coming back to what Ho Suk-ching said earlier, that job or your occupation confers status. I wonder if it is the other way round, that if the job is perceived as a woman's job, then the status of that job

will be low. We just don't seem to be able to get away from that. The job of rearing children and looking after the home - it is not us who downgrades it. We're fighting against that. It's always perceived of as low status because it's merely women's work. How many women do you hear say that "I'm only a housewife." It's not a shameful thing but she has that feeling thrust upon her, her self-image is very low. And when you get men encroaching, if you like, on certain women's traditional areas, like for example chefs, as soon as you get a man coming into the field of cooking, the status of the job soars. A woman cook is nothing; but a chef is considered as a sort of world renowned gourmet. So I think that the problem is quite desperate and worrying because it goes back further than just education, and maybe the root of it is a sort of misogyny, that women just enjoy very low esteem, and are generally disliked by most of human kind, and that is something we have to fight against. I wonder how you perceive the situation.

(Response) Actually, occupational segregation is not a static phenomenon. There is not much research done in this area in Hong Kong. According to my own research, for instance in the United States, previously the job of mid-wife was not a female job. But something just happened during the war or whatever that gradually it became a job mainly done by women. In fact in a book I just finished reading, they cite a lot of examples in that sex roles are a dynamic kind of thing. They tend to change in response to the reality of the environment. That is why I say if we become more committed workers, we can try our best to break into those traditional occupations, then hopefully the perceived role of women, as well as men, will be changed. So if the advertisement is banned from making special reference to sexual preferences, then the job opportunity for men and women will be enlarged. And if men like to enter the so-called 'feminine' jobs they can do it. What you have just mentioned, that the job category, the status of that category could be raised. I'm not sure about the situation in Hong Kong.

(Question) To have advertisements saying that there's equal opportunity isn't enough. In Britain, many authorities, they've got what they call equal opportunity policies. But they're nothing if they're not backed up by training of all the management staff. So that's from the first line of people who interview for jobs. We've gone through a special training program of how to recruit and select and interview people. Only those people who've been through that course are going to be allowed to select and interview, because they then, hopefully, will not be looking at gender in terms of filling posts, but will look at qualities of the people.

(Question) I have just discovered in a women's magazine a rather depressing article covering a recent report by the Equal Opportunities Commission saying that on the whole employers still make a distinction between women and male occupation, that one still tends to steer women into low-grade unskilled jobs, still perceive them to be essentially housewives and home-makers. With men being steered into jobs with a future, with prospects, as they are to be the breadwinners. These underlying assumptions, if they're not challenged and changed, are going to be very problematic.

(Question) I just simply was going to add to that that the phenomenon of 'glass ceiling', as it is called in North America, is generally understood. Now that many women have gained entry level positions, there're now studies being done of whether in fact they rise in management. In fact, they're not present in anywhere near the numbers one would expect for reasons that people have just been talking about. There just has been a major study commissioned by the Canadian government looking at employers. First time employers last year were required to submit complete profiles of their labour forces in their companies. Those figures read pretty depressingly.

(Question) Back to the questions of occupations and choice of occupations. I tend to agree with the last speaker that these sex-role related occupations tend to change from time to time. If you look at Hong Kong's legal and medical profession, they're much dominated by men. They're the sort of profession whereby people acquire status and wealth. Again at the same time if you look at some other countries, women doctors and women lawyers in the Philippines, or in Thailand, they're among the most low-paid occupations, because women are quite willing to accept low economic rewards, because of the option of having a rich husband who don't expect them to make much money. Maybe the options are good, maybe it's bad. But certainly economics, the so-called allocation of scarce resources, has a lot to do with the sort of occupations women are even permitted to take, or even the sort of vocations that men would vacate in favour of women. In the Philippines, even the job of the director of the Medical and Health Department is considered to be terribly low-paid, it could jolly well be taken by a woman, nobody cares. But in Hong Kong, it has never been occupied by a woman. So it's very

will be low. We just don't seem to be able to get away from that. The job of rearing children and looking after the home — it is not, as what Gwen's mentioned, ... We're fighting against that. It's always perceived of as low status because it's mainly women's work. "How many women do you hear say that 'I'm only a housewife.' It's not a thankful thing for she that is in the home, her self image is very low." And when you are once encroaching, if you like, on certain women's traditional areas, like for example cook, as soon as you get a man coming into the field of cooking, the status of the job rises. A woman cook is nothing, but a chef is considered as a sort of world renowned gourmet. So I think that the problem is quite deep-rooted and something because it goes back further than just education, and maybe the root of it is a sort of ..., that women just enjoy very low esteem, and are generally regarded by others of a second kind, and that is something we have to fight against. I wonder how you perceive the situation.

(Response) Actually, occupational segregation is not a static phenomenon. There is not much research done in this area in Hong Kong. According to my own research, for instance in the United States, previously the job of bank teller was not a female job. But something has happened during the last six decades that gradually it became a job mainly done by women. In fact in a book I just finished reading, they cite a lot of examples to show that sex roles are a dynamic kind of thing. They tend to change in response to the reality of the environment. That is why I say if we become more committed workers, we can try our best to break into those traditional occupations, then hopefully the patriarchal role of women, as well as men, will be changed. So if the advertisement is banned from making special reference to certain gender, then the job opportunity for men and women will be enlarged. Also if men like to enter the so-called 'feminine' jobs they can do it. What you have just mentioned, that the job category, the status of that category could be raised. I'm not sure about the situation in Hong Kong.

(Question) I've been ... something saying that there's equal opportunity isn't enough. In Britain, many authorities, maybe you know they call equal opportunity policies. But they're nothing if they're not backed up by training of all the management staff. So they've been carrying out training of people who interview for jobs. We've gone through a special training program of how to recruit and select and interview people. Only those people who have been through that course are going to be allowed to select and interview, because they then, hopefully, will not be looking at people in terms of their gender, but will look at qualities of the people.

(Question) I have just discovered in a women's magazine a rather depressing article regarding a recent report by the Equal Opportunities Commission saying that in the whole employment we still make a distinction between women and male occupations, that men are more likely to push women into low-grade unskilled jobs, with very few chances for them to be essentially independent with homemakers. With men being pushed into jobs with a future, with prospects, as they are to be the breadwinners. These underlying assumptions, if they're not challenged and changed, are going to be very problematic.

(Question) I just simply was going to add to that that the phenomenon of 'glass ceiling', as it is called in North America, is generally understood. Now that many women have gained entry level positions, there's now a much steady climb of women to get into the ranks of management. In fact, they're not up there in anywhere near the numbers one would expect for the reasons that people have been talking about. There has just been a major study commissioned by the Canadian government looking at employers. Five thousand employers ... last year, were [illegible] profiles of their female [illegible] in their companies. Their findings were pretty depressing.

(Question) Back to the questions of perception and the sex of occupations. I tend to agree with the last speaker that these sexually-related occupations tend to change from time to time. If you look at China, Russia's legal and medical profession, they're much dominated by women. They're the sort of profession whereby people regard as women and inferior. Again at the same time if you look at some other countries, women doctors and women lawyers in the Philippines or in Thailand, they're among the most low-paid occupations, because women are quite willing to accept low economic rewards, because of the notion of having a rich husband who don't expect them to make much money. Maybe the notions are good, maybe it's bad. But certainly somewhere, the so-called allocation of scarce resources, has a lot to do with the sort of occupations women are ever grouped into, or even the sort of decisions that men would make in favour of women. In the Philippines, even the job of the Secretary of the Medical and Health Department is considered to be socially low-rank, it could only still be taken by a woman nobody cares. But in Hong Kong, it has never been occupied by a woman. So it's very

different. A lot depends on the resources that we have, whether men are willing to accept the sort of jobs that are low-paid. In other words, going back to the vicious circle of women tending to go into areas of low-paid jobs, maybe if they do not accept it they don't even have the opportunity of entering them. So it's a chicken-and-egg kind of position that we have to look into as well. Certainly the sort of areas they go into, they might be in top management - in Philippines or Thailand, they might be head of their organizations - but they are in low-paid jobs, whereas their husbands are earning millions outside in the private sector.

(Question) On women being unreliable at jobs, I was just wondering how much of that is actual myth, and how much of that is fact. I was wondering if there's been any surveys on that done in Hong Kong, on days taken off by women and days taken off by men. Because in England, I remember reading a survey where the differences were actually quite insignificant, despite all these obligations of looking after children and parents, and other domestic responsibilities. In fact it was found that the days taken off by women were roughly the same as those by men. I'm just wondering how much of this sort of myth we're soaking up. Although it might be a reason for lack of promotion, lack of ability to get on, I'm not sure how much it makes women unreliable.

(Response) I think I shouldn't be the only one to talk. Maybe some of you have some comments.

(Response) I suppose I can't avoid answering to a certain extent. From our experience it is true that women take more time off than men. Perhaps you might say that we work in an essentially service organization, we feel that this is acceptable to us, because we allow our staff flexible hours and we are also more lenient in terms of the way they take their leave. If we're very rigid, they might feel they are facing the firing squad or whatever, and then of course they don't have the nerve to leave the job and go back. That's why as a result, you can see the natural pattern of things: they do take more time off than men. With men, they can always ask the wife to take the children to see the doctor, or their mother to see the doctor. But when this man I mentioned was so irritated by what's going on he decided to have his staff turned into a male force, and this is also an unpleasant experience. That's why I agree that women have a lot of options, particularly from our experience, women who have been fairly well-trained and come from fairly good homes, have wealthy husbands, they tend to use their options quite freely. Anything they don't like they can say that I don't have to work. It's the experience of other employers as well. The women can say, "I can always go back. My husband can look after me. I can be this perfect mother and perfect home-maker. I'll have all the time to do self-study (which they do), flower-arrangement, cooking... I enjoy all those things." The question is whether it's a free choice. If they feel that they like it, why not.

SUMMING UP

Ms. Cecilia Young, co-chairperson of the HKCW

Where shall I start? Actually, Clara, sitting amongst academics and trying to say something is very difficult too. But anyway, today, I think what Clara told us about history still exists today. But there seems to be less scholarly debate at the moment. In the olden days, at least you could come up with a list of books. At the moment we don't seem to have that in Hong Kong. We've got plenty of that in Taiwan, and in China, but not in Hong Kong. What Clara describes - all those names attached to Chinese women in history, at the moment we still have that, unfortunately. We still do have the stigmas that we had in the past, like nu qiang ren (strong women).

Barbara, we enjoyed your telling us about women on the stage. I don't know whether that theatre is theatre at all, but I'm thinking of the beauty contest. The beauty contest is also staged, and women depicted in almost demeaning ways, at the level of lowest self-esteem. Responding to Dr. Bentley's point about what we see in theatre is fictional, why I brought up the beauty contest is that it does influence us. Because we've done research on the beauty contests, that's why I keep going back to that. We find young girls who think that the beauty queen, the heavenly princess if you're beautiful, well - you capture the men with your beauty - all this is being imitated by young girls. O.K, some people might take it as an event. Some people might go to the theatre and think it's fictional and forget about it. I mean there are different reactions from different audiences. But I can say right here and now that with the beauty contests, they do affect a lot of young women and their thinking about their career paths.

As to Susanna, I think what you've told us about the expatriate society here is interesting, because in fact, I've always (being co-chair and chair in the Council last year) come to this dilemma - with Hong Kong history as it is, or at this stage in history - of localization, and how we liaise with those we call the British, but are actually expatriate people as such. I do have to say (to some of the local members here) that with the experience of the Council with a lot of the expatriate women, the ones who are coming in actually are not all colonialists. They are what Susanna termed 'women with a purpose' and 'married campaigners', I find plenty of these people in the Council. I'm not advertising, but they're women trying to go into woman-work, and I think that's necessary to have that interaction and exchange of ideas - and this is what it is all about in this workshop.

Concerning this afternoon, it was really interesting, with Catherine telling us about the abuse of women. In fact, at the bottom line we did do something with the founding of Harmony House and the Women Centre, and also trying to do some work with abused spouses. Then later on with Mona telling us about the grassroot women - a group of people that I think all feminists around do consider and put a lot of emphasis on. As a women's organization, we are at a very neutral ground, in fact. We're working with both (I hate to label but just to put into perspective) the elites, the privileged crowd, and with the not-so-privileged and the under-privileged. We have the channel of communication and we hope to keep that open. In fact it's through the free-flow of information up and down that we can help a lot, and that's what we hope to provide.

Lastly, we had Ho Suk-Ching. Career is that other important part in Hong Kong. Everyone says that Hong Kong is so advanced, you look outside, you look into the Stock Exchange, you look into everything, Hong Kong is on par with the developed world. But, of course, when you look into the women's situation, it's not on par.

Let me come back to the broad view after touching upon the topics. In fact I've learnt in this workshop, for the first time, that the name Flora Shaw is connected with the Hong Kong University, and now more than 80 years afterwards, I'm very happy that the Hong Kong Council of Women is connected with the Centre of Asian Studies again. Maria and Linda could make it happen with their linkage with the University. Really, we always like to provide opportunities so that we could stimulate further action in the area of women's issues. The second point is that we hope to bring the academic and scholarly works to the application in the field, which is very important. I think this workshop is very different from other workshops in that it's not just for academics. We have a mixture here today. I am very enthusiastic about that, and I'm very happy it turned out like that.

So today we have provided opportunities, stimulated action, and brought together academics and activists, as well as women from abroad and from Hong Kong. That is very very encouraging. The other thing

is "what are we going to do now?" How history has become nature: the theme for today was to start our quest to rediscover ourselves as women, and be able to go for more choices to be provided by the society for women. I think just doing it ourselves and having that confidence in rediscovery is not enough. It's got to be supported by the society at large. First I think there must be personal consciousness - what we've explored today. Secondly, on the community level, we have to stress that more community services be provided to women and not just to the family. Certainly this is what the Council has a policy on. Because women need to be centred so that we can bring ourselves up on par with the male in society. Thirdly, we need to influence government policy and look into the legal aspects. I think all these three levels have to be dealt with simultaneously.

On the personal level, I think all of us in this room have to make that effort, to reach the consciousness, ourselves. When it comes to the community level, I think a lot of us here today will go out and speak to community groups. There are a lot of women out there who haven't heard about what went on today, if we can just speak with them. In fact on the community level, if anyone would like to join in, we are at the moment looking at community health projects, and Linda is doing that, reviving the personal health record and the bill of rights, that is, the patient's rights. We find that a lot of women are actually consumers of health. They are the ones who bring their children to the doctors, and they are the ones who bring the older people - parents or in-laws - to the doctors. So in fact we're addressing women specifically with the revival of this health record and information. We are trying to influence the legal level as well. This health record is a very good example of the things we do. This is one piece of action amongst the numerous we're doing. This is one particular one that people can join in now. It's an ongoing thing, and it's first of all, for the women to have that record and rediscover themselves, that their body belongs to them, and they can in fact look at the body without shame. We need to make sure, furthermore, at the social level, that doctors and everyone else, will have to admit that women are important, and that they would give information that belongs to them, and not keep it from them. We have to strengthen women so that they become knowledgeable beings, informed beings.

But we know that we have to start lobbying for our legal rights as well. On the legal side, we have a legal group going. We are trying to push Hong Kong into recognizing the Convention Against Discrimination Against Women, and there is a clause ... equal pay for equal work which has not been signed by the Hong Kong Government. I would like to call for a concerted effort, regardless of ethnic and socio-economic background, to bring about one voice. It's easier to lobby for anything if we have one voice. This is what I'd like to wrap up with today, that is to call for solidarity and concerted effort by women in Hong Kong. To initiate more academic investigations into women's needs. To call for more funding of women's studies and, maybe, to press the government to set up a commission to look into the discrimination of women at home and at work.

So, with this closing note I would like again to call for a united stance of the women's organizations here today. Good luck to all, and go for it.

is "what are we going to do now?". How history has recorded the change for today was to start our effort to rediscover ourselves as women, and be able to go for more services to be provided to the society for women. I think just doing it ourselves and having that comparison of the women's own [illegible] is not enough. It's got to be supported by the society at large. First I think there must be personal consciousness - what we've explored today. Not only on the community level, we have to make sure that those community services be provided to women and not just to the family. Certainly this is what the Council has a policy etc. Because women need to be [illegible] so that we can bring ourselves up on par with the male in society. Thirdly, we need to influence government policy and look into the legal aspects. I think all these three levels have to be dealt with simultaneously.

On the personal level, I think all of us in this room have to make that effort, to reach the consciousness, ourselves. When it comes to the community level, I think a lot of us here today will go out and speak to community groups. There are a lot of women out there who haven't heard about what went on today, if we can just speak with them. In fact on the community level, if anyone would like to join in, we are at the moment working on community health protocols and one of the things that, working on the personal health record and the bill of rights, one is, the patient's rights. We find that a lot of women are actually consumers of health. They are the ones who bring their children to the doctors, and they are the ones who bring the older people - parents or in-laws - to the doctors. So in fact we're actually consumers, usually with no access to the health record and information. We are trying to influence the legal medical way. The health record is a very good example of the things we do. This is one part of what amongst the workshops we're doing. This is one particular one that people can look at now. It's an ongoing thing and it's what we ask for the women to have that record and information themselves, that their body belongs to them, and they can in fact look after their body without shame. We need to make sure, furthermore, at the social level, that doctors and professionals, will have to accept that women are important, and that they should give information that belongs to them, and not keep it from them. We have to strengthen women so that they are more aware, know their rights, knowledge and being.

But we know that we have to push [illegible] for the legal reform as well. On the legal side, we have a legal reform group. We are trying to push Hong Kong into accepting the Convention Against Discrimination against Women, and there is a chapter [illegible] which has not been signed by the Hong Kong Government. I would like to call for an [illegible] of [illegible] and [illegible] to bring about the [illegible]. We need to [illegible] for anything [illegible]. That is what I'd like to urge you with today, that is to call forward [illegible] and [illegible] by women in Hong Kong. [illegible] academic [illegible] into women's needs. I call for more [illegible] of women [illegible] and [illegible] to urge the government to set up a commission to look into the discrimination of women at home and at work.

So with this closing note I would like again to call for a united stance of the women's organizations here today. Thank you all, and go for it.

FEEDBACK

Chair: Maria Jaschok

(Comment) I'm very very glad to be here. I've so enjoyed meeting so many interesting people and listening to such good speakers. I just would like to make a few comments on what I'm picking up.

First of all, I'm a dowser, I find water and minerals and things like that, and I also work with a form of fung sui, which is releasing blocked energy in the earth. I also work as a catalyst releasing energy in people through ancient Chinese medicine which has come out of reflexology (I'm sure all of you would have heard of). I'm giving my first workshop tomorrow, which I'm excited about. I just wanted to say that I've picked up a lot, all day in fact, of high victim consciousness here. And poor us we can't do this and we can't do that. I think it's time (I had just come from twenty months in Johannesburg, where people are really touching the bottoms of their barrels, of their low self-esteem, and victim-consciousness and self-rejection, and all of that) for us to get into our power and acknowledge who we are.

Everyone of us, we women, is the power on this planet. It's mother-earth, mother-nature, and all human lives come through us. We literally have total power over that little being we carry for nine months. We need a man to help us make it, so the two lots of genes are there, but we are totally influencing that baby by our thoughts that we, particularly the thoughts that we repress in ourselves, literally have the last word, and we are, in my book, responsible for the state of the world as it is. So it is up to us now to get ourselves in order. And, when we do, we will then release the blocked feminine energy in the males, which is stopping them from becoming whole men. We've got to do it. We are our creators. Thoughts are creators. Every single thing has been a thought before it became a fact - these chairs, us, the mics, everything was as thought in somebody's mind before it actually became a fact.

This is something I learnt ten years ago when I had a mid-life crisis when I was 54, and I was desperate. My children were leaving home, my mother was just about to die, I was in a second marriage which had never worked (he was a great man but just it wasn't for us), and I didn't know where my life was going, and it was scary, because I didn't have anybody anymore to care for that I could cover up. I went for what I wanted, which meant that I got what I wanted, which was that I followed up water divining and from that I learnt about a whole world of healing through water divining, and the earth energies, and then I became a reflexologist. I was earthing myself; I was coming down literally to earth. I found that I was going to be, again no judgement, like every doctor or therapist endlessly seeing the same people every six months. "Oh, Joyce! I felt so well after that course of reflexology, but the trouble is coming back again. Could I have another set of appointments please?" Suddenly something snapped inside me one day as I was rung by somebody to come again. I said I'm not going to sit here year in and year out as everybody's mother or whatever. I'm going to find out why do we have problems in our bodies in the first place. That truly was the beginning for me, because I had stopped projecting and blaming everybody out there for the way my life is not fulfilling me.

I have taken ever since to the best of my ability full responsibility for every single thing that happens, because I know that I am my creator, that I have actually created my life every single bit of the way, including choosing my parents, (and it doesn't matter what kind of parents we have, in my book, they have been perfect for us - whether they've beat us up, whether illegitimate, or were born crippled - we have chosen it.) We've got to recognize the power that we are. So as my creator, I now know that when I'm looking for water, or looking for the energy stream, that I am asking from my left brain, my magnetic brain, "Where is the key stream to release the blocked energy in this room?" And then I open my magnet to receive the electrical charge from my right brain, to get the electro-magnetic energy; and when I receive it, I get fusion, and then I get my answer.

And that is what we are all about now. We've got to learn to open to receive, and that's is what we are lacking in our lives as long as we are blaming everybody and being victim-conscious. Anybody who gets rejected or doesn't get moved up in a company or anything, please take responsibility that you've set that situation up and try to heal yourself.

We are our own healers. When I set up something that's negative in my life, the first thing that I do

FEEDBACK

Chair: Maria Jacobs

(Comment) I'm very very glad to be here. I've so enjoyed meeting so many interesting people and listening to such good speakers. I just would like to make a few comments on what I'm picking up.

First of all, I'm a dowser, I find water and minerals and things like that, and I also work with a form of time line which is releasing blocked energy in the cause (I also work as a counselor) releasing energy in people through ancient Chinese medicine which has come out of kinesiology (the name of it you would have heard of). I'm giving my first workshop tomorrow, which I'm excited about. I just wanted to say that I've picked up a lot, all day in fact, of high stress [illegible] that people carry on this and we can't do that. I think it's time, (I had that come, from twenty minutes to four onwards, where people are really releasing the bottoms of their barrels of their low self-esteem, and [illegible] and all of that) for us to get into our power and acknowledge who we are.

Everyone of us, we women, is the power on this planet. It's [illegible] earth, [illegible] nature, and all human lives come through us. We women have local power [illegible] we carry for nine months. We need a man to help us make it, [illegible] we are totally influencing that baby by our thoughts that we [illegible] and we are, in my heart, responsible for the state of the world. [illegible] up to us now to get ourselves in order. And, when we do, we will then release the blocked [illegible] which is stopping them from becoming whole [illegible]. [illegible] Every single thing has been a thought before it becomes a fact [illegible] everything was a thought in somebody's mind before it actually became a fact.

This is something I learnt ten years ago when I had a nervous breakdown when I was 34, and I was desperate. My children were leaving home, my mother was [illegible] I was in a second marriage which had never worked [illegible] and I didn't know where my life was going, and it was very [illegible] I went for what I wanted, which meant [illegible] I learnt about a whole world of healing, [illegible] and I was carrying [illegible] I found that I was going to be [illegible] like every doctor [illegible] after that course of reflexology [illegible] Suddenly [illegible] I said I'm not going to sit here [illegible] I'm going to find out why we have problems in our bodies in the first place. That really was the beginning [illegible] I had stopped projecting and blaming everybody else [illegible] for the way my life was turning out.

I have [illegible] full responsibility for every single thing that happens, because I know that I am my creator, that I have [illegible] my life every single bit of the way, including [illegible] and it doesn't matter what I [illegible] they have been perfect for me [illegible] We've got to [illegible] I know that when I'm looking for water, or [illegible] that I am [illegible] "What is the key to [illegible]?" [illegible] my right brain [illegible] and then I get my answer.

And that is what we are all about here. [illegible] and that's what we are [illegible]

We are our own healers. When I [illegible] the first thing that I do

is say, "O.K. The love part at the bottom of my magnet, which happens to be full of garbage, is healing me by bringing up this negative situation. I have created the situation to heal me, to free me. Freedom is what we're seeking. When I acknowledge that, I would also acknowledge the feeling that I'm feeling. I couldn't get a taxi for an hour the other night, and I was going around saying that yes, I created all this and that, and with a smile on my face, and then I suddenly realized I was not being honest about how I was actually feeling. I was walking around in the rain and I was spitting with anger! But it has not been a family habit to admit anger. Suddenly I saw that I was blocking from getting a taxi. I was admitting I was creating the situation, but I was not admitting exactly how I was feeling. Immediately I said I am spitting with rage and I said much stronger words than that and - I got a taxi. So I freed the energy by my changing my thoughts. Thoughts are creative. So please don't go round blaming everybody. Let's take responsibility for our lives. We are ready now to heal this wonderful earth plane. When we heal ourselves, we heal the earth, because it's the outer manifestation of us. It's polluted, we've been polluted. But as we earth the energy, which means changing our thoughts and handling situations inside and stopping dumping on other people, we're really going to go places. God bless you and thank you for having me here.

(Comment) I really enjoyed the workshop today. I hope that, as you promised, that there will be further workshops also. I think women in Hong Kong are coming into their own now and questioning. I think it's interesting because it's a period when the feminists in America and U.K. are also questioning themselves where they're going, that would also be interesting that we're benefitting from this questioning. I appreciate that I didn't have to go through this bra-burning stage -

(Chair) Well, I didn't, sisters. I think that's one of the myths that I'm particularly furious about.

(Comment) (cont'd) I would like also to talk about the psychological-emotional involvement, like how women cope with anger, stress and effects on their own psychosomatic state, and so forth, at the emotional level -

(Chair) which we excluded somewhat today.

(Cecilia) Maria, can I add something. Actually the Hong Kong Council - we're not advertising here - we do run what we call open meetings, and we do have single topics like 'women and the law' and we do have sub-committees, in fact, within the Council. We have the Legal Sub-committee which is looking at the legal rights of women; we have the Health Sub-committee which is actually coordinated by Linda; and Maria is concerned with most of the academic work. So in fact whoever is interested - within the Council, hopefully the sub-committees can run their own workshops, and from those workshops, hopefully action can come, and not just discussion.

(Comment) From my own experience when I started to attend international conferences ten years ago for my first lecture, I was trembling so much with fear that all the papers fell down and I had to collect them later on - it was a terrible situation. Nowadays, I'm much more interested in the contributions by younger people than the contributions by elder people, because a lot of theirs have been printed already - I know how they think, I know about their research. I just want to encourage all of you - if somebody has to add something, I think it's interesting for all of us to know about this, to know what they're doing, their research, their way of thinking, and I think this would add a lot to the discussion here. On the other hand, I think you won't be so afraid anymore when you have to attend international conference, or bigger audience, with many critical men in the audience.

(Chair) As a matter of fact, I don't know whether you realized (I'm sure you didn't), but Clara Lau this morning was very very anxious because it was Clara's first public talk she gave, ever. And she told me that she'd like to do it here because she thought that would be the most supportive context she could possibly have. And it's proven to be supportive, I think Clara agrees with that.

(Comment) I'm very sorry that I was late in coming. But there's one question that has been puzzling me, and I've been asking what's the bottom line to all of this? Where do we think we're going? What do women really want? Is there something called universal wants for all women, across cultural lines and situational constraints? So do we pay any attention to the conscious choice of women themselves? What is the problem of labelling certain women when they choose to become housewives, choose to do this and that? How will this labelling

affect woman's mental health and her performances? So I think, (we won't get answers here) but could the organizers say something about this, or the Hong Kong Council of Women? Do you think that there're universal wants among women across all cultural lines, irrespective of all situational constraints?

(Comment) We just want what everyone wants regardless of sex, which is equal choice and not discrimination. On the other hand I think this article that was published in the South China Morning Post about a month ago - the incident about peasant girls in Jiangxi Province committing mass suicide because they were dissatisfied with the fact that they were born as girls. So this was an extreme situation. It was also known in China that there was a tremendous amount of female infanticide. Again, that's an extreme situation. But the point is that women are not given that choice. It's not that we're asking for anything more, but just to be equal, and have a choice.

(Chair) I think I agree with that. Any kind of constraint whether on male or female, I think, is certainly bound to have effects that can be considered negative. As regards that particular incident in Jiangxi from what I gather looking at the background of mass suicide, it's not just to do with the fact that they felt they could not go on living as women in a world that was basically hostile to women. I gather it's an area where traditionally there has been marriage resistance, and traditionally there have been group suicides. So this was also, I think, a very emphatic demonstration on the part of these women about the lack of choices and options in a culture that is still very feudal.

(Comment) I think that's not quite true. Mass suicide of young adolescent girls is not - I mean suicide was widely practised on an individual level as a result of domineering mother-in-laws, etc. It is very interesting that many of the victims dressed in their best clothes before throwing themselves into the lakes together, in the belief that they would come back to a better life. In fact, in traditional China female infanticide was sometimes rationalized that it then gave the girl a chance to be re-born as a boy. But in this situation, many despaired of their poverty and lack of education after visiting cities and resented their parents for forbidding them to go to high school or leave their village. Quote: "We have nothing good to eat, wear or do. At home we are controlled by our parents and when we marry, by our husbands. City girls wear fine clothes and go to cinemas - it is the life of an angel."

affect women's mental health and her performance? So I think (we won't get answers here), but would the organizers say something about this, or the Hong Kong Council of Women? Do you think that there's universal want among women across all cultural lines, 'irrespective of all situational constraints?'

(Comment) We just want what everyone wants regardless of sex, which is equal choice and not discrimination. On the other hand I think this certain line was probably... In the South China Morning Post about a month ago - the incident about peasant girls in Fujian Province committing mass suicide because they were dissatisfied with the fact that they were born as girls. So this was an extreme situation. It was also known in China that there was a tremendous amount of female infanticide. Again, that's an extreme situation. But the point is that women are not given that choice. It's not that we're asking for anything more, but just to be equal, and have a choice.

(Chair) I think I agree with that. Any kind of campaign whether for male or female, I think, is certainly bound to have effects that can be considered negative. As regards that particular incident as I gather from what I gather looking at the background of mass suicide, it was just to do with the fact that they felt they could not go on living as women in a world that was basically hostile to women. I gather it's an area where traditionally there has been marriage resistance, and traditionally there's been group suicides. So this was why, I think, a very emphatic denunciation on the part of those women about the lack of choices and options in a culture that is still very feudal.

(Comment) I think that's not quite true. Mass suicide of young adolescent girls is not - I mean suicide was widely practised on an individual level as a result of domineering mother-in-laws, etc. It is very interesting that many of the women dressed in their best clothes before throwing themselves into the lakes together, in the belief that they would come back to a better life. In fact, in traditional China female infanticide was sometimes rationalised that it then gave the girl a chance to be reborn as a boy. But in this situation, many despaired of their poverty and lack of education which was the case, and resented their parents for forbidding them to go to high school or leave their village. Quote: "We have nothing good to eat, wear or do. At home we are constrained by our parents and when we marry, by our husbands. City girls wear fine clothes and go to cinemas - it is the life of an angel."

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